



The British Journal of Telefantasy

No. 75

MARCH 1990

U.K. £1.80 rec.
U.S. \$4.95 Can. \$6.25



DWB 075
\$ 5.50

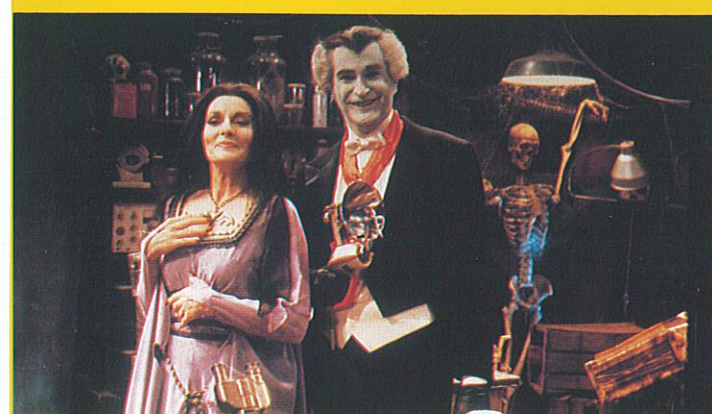


B B C VIDEO: THE INTERVIEW



P.O.Box 1015, BRIGHTON BN2 2YU

WE'VE HAD a very encouraging response so far to this year's Readers Poll. Very interesting facts are emerging about your preferences concerning DWB and telefantasy in general which will help us to shape the magazine over the next year. So if you value your right to vote, then use it! You have until March 20th. We've also been besieged with orders following our back issues offer and leaflet campaign which also appeared in DWB#73. If you're a new reader as a result of receiving our leaflet with a John Filton catalogue or In-Vision then welcome aboard. You still have until the end of March to order back issues at discounted prices, but please note that DWB#57 has sold out. Finally, I hope you will enjoy our novel new-look story review, Memory Cheats (pages 16-17). The identity of this issue's reviewer is none other than Craig Hinton, who apparently possessed a vast literary capacity for a one-year-old! GARY



CONTENTS: Cover - By Alister Pearson, designed to adorn the new BBC Video release of 'An Unearthly Child'; 2/3 - WHO news; 4/5/6 - Letters; 7/8 - Video Projection: A look at what the development in video technology holds for the telefantasy fan in the nineties; 9/10 - Telefantasy news; 10/11 - A report on current US telefantasy series facing cancellation by ratings-conscious bosses; 11/12 - Susan Polan returns to review revived myths and popular fantasy shows of old, including 'Munsters Today' (pictured above (c) MCA TV); 12 - We examine the prospects of the mooted forthcoming 'Avengers' movie; 13/14/15 - David Jackson, Producer of BBC Home Entertainment, tells us about BBC Video's policies and plans for the nineties; 15 - We review the latest BBC Video 'Doctor Who' releases, 'An Unearthly Child' and 'The War Games'; 16 - Does the memory cheat? We go back 26 years and review the very first 'Doctor Who' story afresh; 18/19 - We assess the impact of Sophie Aldred's Ace on 'Doctor Who' and enter the confused mind of this endearing character; Back cover - The artwork adorning W.H.Allen's forthcoming novelisation of 'The Curse of Fenric' by Alister Pearson.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Marek Anton, Jeremy Bentham, Bruce Campbell, Tony Clark, Stacey Clegg & BBC Video, Peter Darvill Evans & W.H.Allen, John H. Elson, Craig Hinton, David Jackson, Mark James, Paul Kirkley, Ian Levine, MCA TV, Jane Paris & I TV Film Purchase Dept., Alister Pearson, Susan Polan, Michael Richardson, Gary Russell & BBC Picture Publicity, Mark Smith, The Stage & Television Today, Titan Books, Kathleen Toth.

TO ORDER NEXT ISSUE (DWB#76, April 1990): Send a crossed cheque/PO payable to DWB for £1.80 (£2.20 in card envelope) or \$4.25 to DWB#76, PO Box 1015, BRIGHTON BN2 2YU. A SUBSCRIPTION from next issue up to January 1991 is £22.50 (£28 for card envelopes) or US\$52 (Please enclose an SAE).

DWB ADVERTISING RATES AND SPECIFICATIONS

FAN: One page (A4 camera ready) £92; 1/2 page (130 x 390 / 270 x 195mm) £46; 1/3 page (130 x 195mm / 61 x 390mm) £23; Eighth page (61 x 195 / 130 x 95mm) £11.50; Sixteenth page (61 x 95mm) £5.75.

COMMERCIAL: One page (£115); Half page (£57.50); Quarter page (£28.75); Eighth page (£14.40); Sixteenth page (£7.20).

FULL COLOUR rates available on request... All prices inclusive of VAT... For US rates convert into dollars... Copy date for next issue: March 2nd... All ads must be in black ink and typed... No refunds can be given for ads sent and subsequently published under-size... Ads likely to cause any offence or in breach of any copyright will be refused insertion... Sixteenth page ads can be set by us at no additional cost... Discount rates available for charity ventures and multiple insertions on request.

VOLUME TWO, NUMBER TWO: PUBLISHED FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16th 1990. EDITED, DESIGNED AND PUBLISHED BY GARY LEIGH TO WHOM ALL MATERIAL IS COPYRIGHTED AND MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED IN ANY FORM WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION. THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE SOLELY OF THE WRITERS AND ARE NOT INTENDED TO BE INDICATIVE OF EDITORIAL POLICY. NO ATTEMPT IS MADE TO INFRINGE ANY EXISTING RELATED COPYRIGHTS. PRINTED BY 'THE REPROGRAPHIC CENTRE'

TIME RUNNING OUT?

DOCTOR WHO will have to be made completely independently away from the BBC for Season 27 - if it is to be back on our screens in early 1991.

All BBC productions made inhouse - either by staff or independent producers - have already been booked in up to March 1991.

Therefore if Season 27 of Doctor Who were to be produced either inhouse, or independently utilizing BBC inhouse facilities, then the earliest it could go into production would be in April 1991 - meaning it might not

be back on our screens until the following September, or even January 1992!

PROTEST IF BBC STALL AGAIN

Although an announcement concerning Doctor Who's future has been promised for April, we are wary that the BBC might again stall as they have done twice already and delay revealing publicly their plans for the series by another few months.

If this indeed occurs again then DWB will propose suitable action. In no uncertain terms the BBC are committed to taking Who "through the nineties".

DAEMONS IN COLOUR

STOP PRESS: FEBRUARY 5. BBC ARCHIVES today confirmed they hold all five episodes of the 70's classic 'The Daemons' in full colour.

Up until now it was believed that episode one was held as a black and white print only, but a full colour clip from this episode shown on the January 28 edition of BBC2's Boxpops series in colour prompted DWB to look into the matter.

BBC Archives revealed that The Daemons copy they hold is primarily converted from American prints consisting of 525 lines, with the exception of episode four which is British standard 625 lines.

Although the copy is not deemed suitable for televising - only black and white tapes will be supplied to BSB - it is believed it is of a good enough quality to make it onto video...



W.H. ALLEN SCOTCH 'BANKRUPT' RUMOURS

FOLLOWING rumours circulating that W.H.Allen have gone into liquidation, the company have issued the following statement:

"You may have seen recent press reports that there have been large-scale redundancies at W.H.Allen.

If so, you are perhaps asking yourself:

- are these reports true?
- will W.H.Allen continue to exist?
- what will happen to Doctor Who books?

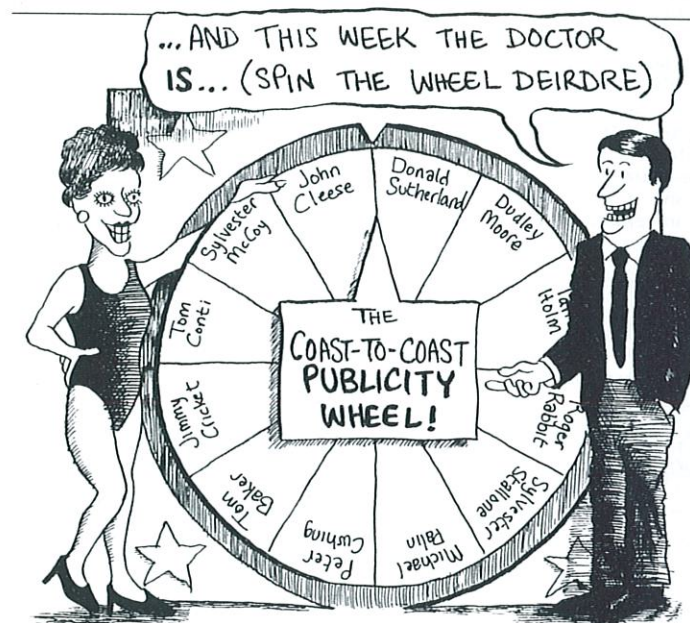
The true situation is that there has been a major reorganisation of W.H.Allen. Some imprints

have been closed, and some staff have been made redundant. The company's operations will in future be more closely co-ordinated with the parent company, Virgin Communications.

W.H.Allen will continue in existence. The publishing operations of the imprints that remain will continue as before.

In particular, we intend that the publication of Doctor Who books will be unaffected.

Press release issued by Peter Darvill-Evans on behalf of W.H.Allen & Co. Plc.



BRIEFLY...

BSB, the satellite station, is now scheduled to go on air in late April, though still no sign of the squarish dishes. A feature on Doctor Who is being planned for BSB's own home-grown series called A Peculiar Passion to herald the series' run on the company's Galaxy channel. The feature will be incorporated into an episode looking at SF enthusiasts. Cue the scarves and floppy hats...

W.H.ALLEN have run into fresh problems over John Peel's bid to novelise the Troughton/Dalek epics. Therefore neither are scheduled for the near future. Meanwhile editor Peter Darvill Evans is in negotiation with BBC Video over the possibility of reprinting the novels connected with this year's video releases complete with Alister Pearson's artwork. This would certainly improve on the present An Unearthly Child and War Games Target covers for starters!

DWAS have finally got around to announcing details of the next Panopticon convention - the first in more than two years! It will take place in Coventry on 19-21st October this year. Fans aggrieved at the ever-widening gap between DWAS conventions may like to know that a one-day event is also proposed for London this summer. Details will be in the next CT, which we're assured will be out in time for your bookings...

TITAN have announced they will be releasing no less than four further Doctor Who Script Books this year, though their titles have yet to be revealed, but we can claim 99% certainty that at least one will be titled The Three Doctors...

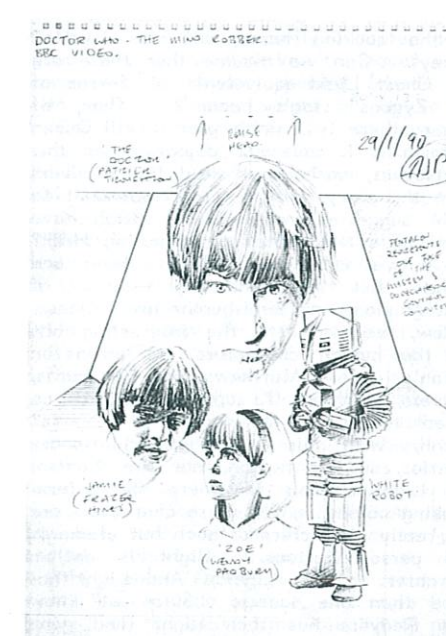
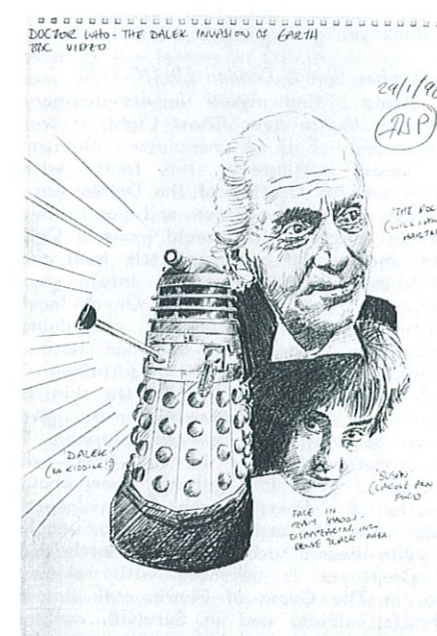
IT WAS Richard Thomas's letter in DWB#68 which spurred artist Alister Pearson into contacting BBC Home Entertainment (something he had been meaning to do for ages) about the possibility of doing video covers.

By way of saying "thankyou" to Richard, Alister has incorporated the initials 'RT' into his An Unearthly Child painting as part of a rocky landscape as follows (see this month's cover):



The ever-busy artist is currently overloaded with commissions at the moment and has kindly provided DWB with some provisional sketches below. The Battlefield artwork for Target's forthcoming novelisation will remain largely unaltered. BBC Video, however, have asked Alister to include Big Ben to his painting for the Dalek Invasion of Earth video cover, an element he had been resisting in a bid to break away from the cliché Achilles and movie poster versions.

BBC Video have also requested that Alister incorporate a few of the mythical creatures to his design for The Mind Robber video sleeve. Thankfully BBC Video have put their schedules forward a month giving Alister slightly more time. These two will now be out in May, the unedited versions of The Five Doctors and Brain of Morbius in July and the yet to be confirmed The Web Planet and The Dominators in October, all released on the first Mondays of their respective months.



Shedding Light on Gobbledegook

Daniel O'Mahony, Hants (23-1-90)

A good deal of criticism that surrounds Marc Platt's *Ghost Light* concerns the apparent incomprehensibility of the plot. Superficially, to the casual viewer, it appears to be a bit of a mess, and there is certain justification in this criticism. But *Ghost Light* is unlike any other *Doctor Who* story, and the interpretation of the plot lies on a different plain to normal *Doctor Who* plots. All the details are there, but they cannot be interpreted as clearly and straight-forwardly as any other *Doctor Who* plot. Let me answer some of the more straight-forward questions first.

In response to some of David Miller's questions (DWB#73) concerning Redvers Fenn-Cooper, may I put it that since he is clearly off his rocker, all the talk about the Elusi Forests and Zanzibar is absolute insane ramblings, and he has never seen "giant lizards, like giant dinosaurs" except in his imagination, although for my money he has probably met "young Conan Doyle". The whole scene seems to act as a device to throw the unwary off the track. Other questions that have straight-forward answers include why the household didn't "awake" until six o'clock. Well, since Josiah is absolutely terrified of Light in any form then it's reasonable to assume that he didn't want to be around when it was light. The day-servants are simply there to prepare for the night-time inhabitants' use (do you know how long it took for a large meal to be prepared in the 1880's?). Reverend Matthews reverts to Gorilla-hood as part of Josiah's evolutionary meddling - he's certainly got all the right genetic codes for the job.

One point I'm not too clear on is how Josiah knew that the Doctor and Ace were present as they cannot have met before. I have an interesting possibility - since, early in episode one Josiah refers to "our guests", he clearly knows that there is someone other than the usual bunch and Matthews in the house. But the Doctor and Ace haven't met any of the inhabitants yet? Well, they're certainly being watched by something - the glowing eyes of the rocking horse and the 'stuffed turkey'. Can we assume that these are the *Ghost Light* equivalents of Terror of the Zygons' stag's head? Then, of course, there is Josiah's plot to kill Queen Victoria. I have no objection to this whatsoever, without it we'd lose Redvers from the story, but as a correspondent to DWM suggested, why should Josiah have been made King after assassinating HRH? The answer is he wouldn't have been, and therein lies the pathetic essence of Josiah's plans and semi-human pretensions.

Now, we come to the interesting bit. All the human characters are pawns in Josiah's game - Matthews, the Pritchards, Redvers, Nimrod (I suppose he can be called human...), MacKenzie etc. Yet Josiah, with his amazing evolutionary abilities, is not human, nor are Control and Light. This is where the lateral thinking comes in, for these characters are not really characters as such but elements and personifications. Light is not a character. It is *Light*! And Light has more than one source. Since we know that Redvers has seen Light (and gone mad), isn't it possible that Redvers has

given Light a second source, outside the hibernating cubicle, in his snuff-box? Since Light has no physical form, it could fit inside such a small place, and like the other 'source', Light is trying to get out.

Control and Josiah are aliens, and we can assume they are engaged in the survey. Control certainly seems integral to the survey. As Light observes in episode three, when he discovers that everything has evolved and he is going to have to amend his catalogue, he is going to have to spend more time in Control's company. But what is she in Control of? Whenever she is about, the dead insects kept by Josiah start to come alive, so surely she is in Control of Life. With both her and Light safely hibernating after the survey is complete, Life gets out of Control, literally. So where is Life?

Josiah is an alien, he has adopted human customs and pretensions, so why can't he adopt a human name? The Doctor says the survey is Josiah. But the survey is also of Life, so Josiah is Life, and Life evolves. With the advent of man, Life is intelligent enough to break out of its hibernation cubicle, although it still has a little catching up to do. But Control is a threat, she is the Control of Life and can reduce Life back to its original state, as she finally does in episode three. She also has considerable Control over Life's previous evolutionary stages - the Husks (weren't insects, and later lizards, the dominant evolutionary Life-Forms on Earth once?), and thus, when she is cowering behind the locked door in episode two, with the threat of the release of Light, the Husks are dormant. When the Doctor and Ace manage to stop Light breaking free, she emerges, and once more the Husks become animate. This is the essential relationship between the three.

Yes, I know it all sounds pretentious and 'psuedy', but it's my interpretation, and it is only an interpretation. To those who say "Well, it still turned the viewers off", I say it wasn't the ratings success it deserved to be because of poor publicity. After all, *The Prisoner's Fall* Out episode has never been particularly comprehensible, and neither are any of Dennis Potter's plays, but look at the ratings they got!!

On a different note, I read with interest the headline of DWB#74. The news: Sophie Aldred and Sylvester McCoy may not be staying on for Season 27. The headline: *Sophie's Uncertain Future...*

I think you got your priorities right!

Christopher Wood, London E9 (10-1-90)

I'm afraid I find myself in disagreement with Tim Munro over *Ghost Light*; it was a shambles! Full of unexplained claptrap and ideas. Whatever the faults with stories such as *Destiny of the Daleks* etc., at least they make sense and don't have holes in the plot that would make a CVE seem small. An annoying little man and half-dressed girl wander into your house...you throw them out! Or at least demand to know what they are doing there. If you saw a caveman butler, wouldn't you seem a little surprised? When a spider or snake sheds its skin it doesn't go running about of its own accord...so why and how did Josiah's? And why were they in the hands of Control? Why did Light not know about evolution? Pretty dumb for a 'super' being. And why are Cartmel & Co. unable to write decent deaths? In *Battlefield* the Destroyer is defeated with relative ease, in *The Curse of Fenric* evil almost commits suicide, and in *Survival*...well, I can't explain what happened to the

Master! But in *Ghost Light*...Marc Platt: "How shall I write Light out, Andrew?" Cartmel: "I know, make him flash and throw out electrical beams, then make him disappear. Easy." Is Marc Platt a pen-name for the Mister Men? I just prey that Gerry Davis and Terry Nation secure the show...pros doing a pro job.

Christopher Nield, Kent (15-1-90)

I have a few comments on Peter Anghelides' review of *The Curse of Fenric*. He asks why Ace carried a steel climbing ladder in her rucksack. Well, what does he think she should have carried, a mink coat? Grant her some intelligence. Does the connection between Juddson's disability and Millington have to be explained? All we need to know is that there is one, which deepens our understanding of their relationship. Character development, I think it's called. Why was the Ancient Haemovore the only articulate monster? You may as well ask why queen bees are larger than the rest, and if Peter wants to take the matter further, he'd better ask God! The idea that death plays chess dates back centuries, although I suppose the nearest reference point is the Ingmar Bergman film *The Seventh Seal*. *Fenric* was just updating this (to quote) "dark legend". As to the implied connection between the death of Ace's grandfather and Millington's order to lock his shipmates in a burning hold, they weren't the same incident (Millington's experience was "many years ago"), but I think they were similar because they were both caused by *Fenric*, through Kathleen Dudman to her husband and through Millington to the crew. Perhaps *Fenric* likes fires?

The Doctor's reference to the cyper room being correct down to the files was probably just a comment to stop Ace asking too many questions, or just a half true throwaway line. Afterall, it's not as if he looked at the files in any detail, and he was wrong because of the school photo. The post war bible was obviously an intentional anachronism, along with the SuperTed toy and the road sign in episode one (weren't all road signs taken down during World War II?).

Although I can't be sure, I feel certain the Silver Nemesis continuity was actually put in by Cartmel, who must also have put in the *Ghost Light* reference, showing that this season was shown in completely the wrong order! In *Fenric* Ace mentions "an old house in Perivale", in *Survival* we see she was let off by the police, which we can assume was for the fire in Gabriel Chase, and yet *Ghost Light* is shown before these adventures, ruining the intended build-up. So the order of the season should have been *Fenric*, *Survival*, *Ghost Light*, then *Battlefield*.

Jonathan Hayward, London N16 (1-1-90)

I believe another contributing factor to the disastrous ratings last year, apart from the lack of publicity, was Season 26's running order; *Battlefield* was simply not a strong enough focal point for the enmassed eyes of the press. Had *The Curse of Fenric* come first, especially with its moody and atmospheric first episode, the series might have gained some free publicity through decent reviews and caught the fickle public's imagination. Instead both press and public got a more-of-the-same impression which stuck. The filming order of *Fenric*, *Battlefield*, *Survival* and *Ghost Light* to round off the season on a high would have been far more preferable. In all, though, JNT has left the series in a pretty good shape for the independents...

MIXED UP KID

Roger Spence, Bucks (19-11-89)

Ace seems to be a rather mixed up kid. One minute she's dispensing whole armies of Cybermen with a "wicked" catapult, fearless in the face of death. The next minute she's a shuddering, nervous wreck, afraid of old dark houses. Hmmm.

I realise that our incredibly talented writers and script editors are just trying to inject a little depth into her character, but where do you start with a tomboy in a bomber jacket who, although from Perivale, was found in a spaceship and who spends her time shouting "ace!" and "wicked!" while throwing aerosols of nitro-nine around?

Given this less than convincing background, it is all the more to Sophie Aldred's credit that she can still just pull it off. If only Ace had been a little more normal in the first place...

Our view of Ace: Page 18...

WHAT IS "TRADITIONAL" 'WHO'?

Kate Ozman, N.S.W. Australia (20-1-90)

I can't help but wonder what Tim Munro means when he talks about "traditional" *Doctor Who*. Does he mean traditional black and white *Who*, or traditional action-adventure *Who*, or traditional Gothic *Who*, or what?

The truth is, *Doctor Who* has no traditions. The show has always changed with the times, which is precisely why it has survived so long! A story like *Ghost Light* is no more traditional than *Genesis of the Daleks* was in its day, or *Spearhead from Space* before it. These stories broke new ground, which is why they are remembered. Actually, *Ghost Light* is such an extraordinary story, I can't think of a single previous tale with which to compare it.

If *Doctor Who* has any tradition, it is to entertain. Like all the stories in Season 26, *Ghost Light* fulfils this tradition admirably. But it's simply silly to say that this is the first Cartmel story in which the Doctor has to "work". What was he doing in *Remembrance of the Daleks* - relaxing? Or what about his constant quest for the truth about the *Psychic Circus*?

As for the Gallifreyan artifacts, neither the Hand nor the Nemesis were ultra-convenient, lazy-writer solutions for the Doctor to use. The very presence was a major part of his problem! Both tales required him to think his way out of the situation. The Doctor is, afterall, immensely intelligent - a powerful, alien creature. He has knowledge and abilities that are simply beyond our ken. To pretend this isn't true would be to deny a fundamental - and fascinating - part of his character. True, it could become a convenience, but this certainly hasn't happened yet (his new "brain zapping" abilities, for instance, only echo Pertwee's *Venusian Aikido*).

Doctor Who will go on to create new traditions - despite a small group of fans who wish it were back the way they liked it.

TEN-YEAR TRANSITION PERIOD

Mark Saunders, Isle of Wight (30-12-89)

I thought Richard Fitzgerald's 'Brighton Beach Memoirs' (DWB#73-74) really summed up the 80's and John Nathan-Turner's mostly negative attitude to fandom and criticism. I don't think the 1980's will be remembered as anything other than an embarrassing transition

period between the 1970's and the 1990's for *Doctor Who*.

I have high hopes for the 1990's, and I hope with all my heart that the Davis/Nation bid is successful. JNT made *Doctor Who* embarrassing and it really needs the 'old school' to relaunch the programme.

"AINLEY CHARACTERISES 80's 'WHO'"

Paul Clifton, London SW1 (2-2-90)

I was appalled on reading Anthony Ainley's reply to the North Wales Local Group's polite invitation to attend one of their meetings (DWB#74). What a rude, misguided individual he appears to be. Certainly his points raised are valid, but why lower himself to such nastiness when a simple "no thanks" would have sufficed? Anyone could be mistaken for thinking he was on a par with the likes of great *Who* actors such as Tom Baker. The truth is, Anthony Ainley's performances as the 'Master' have characterised *Doctor Who* of the 80's - gaudy, hammy, pantomimesque and largely cringe-inducing to watch. Message to incoming producer(s). Let the memory of the Master (i.e. the real Master as portrayed in the 70's by Roger Delgado) rest in peace.

Meanwhile I was interested to read in the news section that John Nathan-Turner has yet to fully relinquish his hold on the programme. I assumed he had left last December for the new series of BBC2's *Food And Drink* programme as resident chef? Am I mistaken?



ED: Sadly, Paul, you are indeed mistaken. JNT-lookalike Michael Barry is the man serving up the mouth-watering concoctions on *Food And Drink*. (Above: Who's who?)

THE INFLEXIBILITY OF FILM

Jonathan Collins, Cardiff (12-1-90)

Most of the letters in DWB recently have been in favour of an independently-produced *Doctor Who*. Whilst I, too, am in favour of the show being made outside the BBC, it will only be a step forward if this is what it claims to be: an independent production, free from unwanted influences from BBC executives. Fans will by now have realised that the one thing the show doesn't need are BBC busy bodies laying down rules about the type of programme they think *Doctor Who* should be. Seasons 24 and 23 were unfortunate examples of this. Therefore, I strongly hope that the BBC don't, in selling the show, put pressure on the independent company to make the show in a particular vein. However, in so saying, there is a definite probability that Season 27 will not continue the trend being built up since, say, Season 25 which led to some much better stories last year. With a completely new production team making it, Season 27 won't follow on a natural progression of what we have been seeing lately. That is just one of the risks that has to be taken.

Another topical aspect of the next season is the possibility of it being made entirely on film. Here, I cannot agree with the opinion that this is a good move. Andy McKinney mentions *Spearhead from Space* (DWB#73) as an example in favour of the total use of film. I'd agree that in the case of *Spearhead* this was a good move, although forced on the then production team. However, film has the rather unfortunate problem of not having the range of special effects available to it in the cheap area of television programming that video taping does. CSO and Paintbox only work with video images; to do the same thing with film requires it to be converted to video first. Going back to *Spearhead*, this was an exception as far as *Doctor Who* stories go in that it didn't need that many effects. These days, a film-only method would be impractical. Would we see the Paramount method employed? *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is, I believe, recorded onto film, then copied onto video tape for the editing and effects stages. I don't know how much this costs, but it certainly isn't free.

On the subject of ST:NG, Jonathan Hayward (DWB#73) is lucky to have such a considerate rental shop near him. Where I am, I'm hard-pressed to find one tape now, and getting hold of the latest releases is virtually impossible; the rental shops have given up trying to keep up with the series. I for one would be strongly in favour of the tapes coming out at a budget price, and I've heard that now they've just about finished Season One, they're considering bringing out a trial budget tape. If they do, I urge all *Star Trek* fans to go out and buy it - even if it is *Encounter at Farpoint*!

SYLVESTER DESERVES A PROPER EXIT

Gavin Gray, Edinburgh (24-1-90)

Congratulations on your *Yeti Special*, packed with fascinating articles - especially on 80's *Who*. It was a joy to read and well worth every penny.

However I was disappointed to learn, in DWB#74, that Sylvester and Sophie may not be appearing in *Doctor Who* when it returns in 1991. I definitely agree that the show needs a change of style and an injection of new blood and ideas, but I also believe that Sylvester and Sophie should appear in at least some of the season. There needs to be some continuity between Seasons 26 and 27. Moreover, as McCoy's Doctor is generally accepted as a 'good' Doctor, he deserves to leave with some impact: simply opening Season 27 with a new Doctor would be unfair to McCoy whose tenure is at present incomplete, not to mention short. They did it to Colin Baker, let's hope they don't do it to McCoy. He merits a good send-off, as does Sophie Aldred.

DWB#74 also interviewed Gerry Davis, a possible contender for independent producer of *Doctor Who*. From what I've read, I hope he doesn't get it! Allowing the Doctor to adopt "a more indirect rôle" indeed! His "assistants taking up the action"... As the title implies, the programme is about *Doctor Who*, not his companions. Mr. Davis wants to take it back to the old days when Hartnell had little to do and was sometimes absent from episodes. I'm not anti-Hartnell, quite the opposite, but the thing I disliked about his era was that he often became 'just another character', as Davison did. Another point Davis makes is that he wants "less psuedo science, and more hard action" at the same time keeping it non-violent. Sounds like he plans to turn it >

into The A Team! I, and many others, love the pseudo-science as exemplified by the Christopher Bidmead era which has to be one of my favourites. Time dilemmas, gravity bubbles etc. All fascinate me and it would be a great shame if this approach was abandoned.

Nigel Thomas, Shropshire (5-1-90)

Some people seem to be getting excited over the prospect of Davis and Nation winning the rights to produce Doctor Who. There is an implication that they will be able to do it better than JNT.

Caution! How much do these men really know about Doctor Who? A lot of things have happened to the character and the continuity since Gerry Davis last did the script editing? The people who appreciate the programme know more about Doctor Who than anyone 'in the business' (even more than the man who's just left). I fear a return to simplistic, childish adventures with a continuity that will take us right back to the Troughton days.

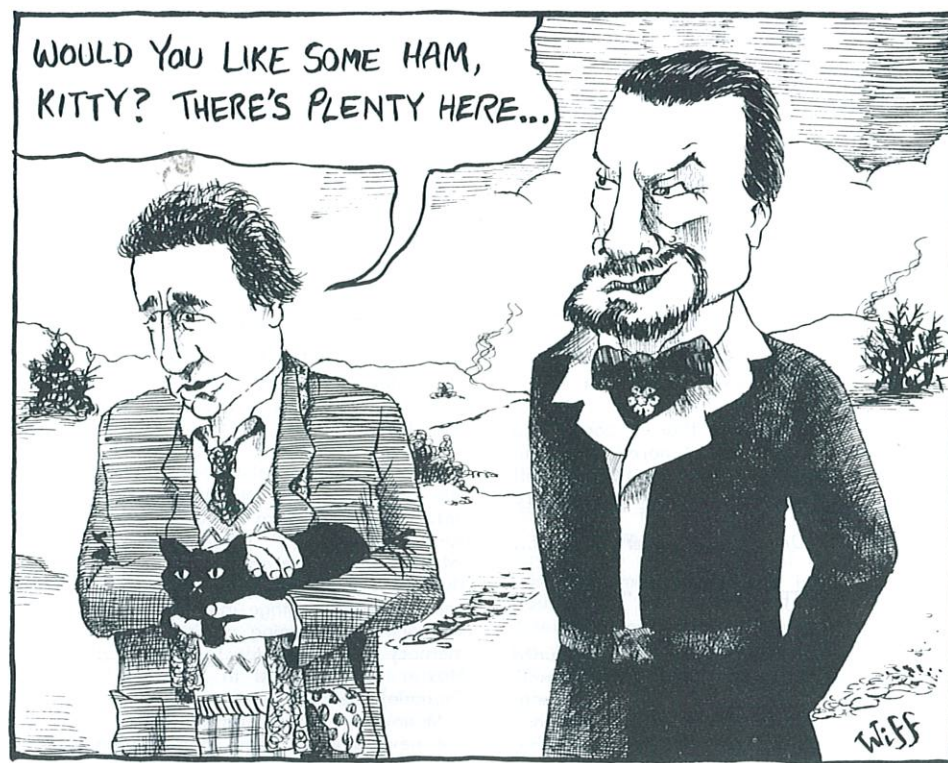
To the new producer I say use Season 26 to develop from - a starting point. Don't dismiss the eighties!!

ARE THE BBC ROBBING US?

David Waddell, Glasgow (23-11-89)

I cannot believe the BBC. I find it disgraceful that they refuse to screen classic Doctor Who episodes, yet they have the audacity to release these episodes on video cassettes costing between £9.99 and £19.99 and selling them to BSB, making the viewer fork out for a satellite dish and its necessary components.

The BBC are robbing us of the freedom



to see classic SF which we funded in the first place!

Saturdays are now so dull and predictable. Yet isn't it strange how the appalling The Flying Doctors is currently scheduled at peak time whereas in the seventies it

would undoubtedly have been considered summertime Saturday evening fayre - as a filler between Doctor Who seasons!

The BBC now seem intent only in serving up game shows and Aussie soaps ad nauseam!!

special feature

VIDEO PROJECTION

AS A NEW DECADE BEGINS, JEREMY BENTHAM ASSESSES THE FUTURE FOR THE SCIENCE FICTION VIDEO COLLECTOR...

ARE YOU READY for video in the nineties? Do you know what the new developments in home video entertainment are? Do you know what plans distributors and regulating authorities are considering for the years ahead? Do you know what software will be open to you and in what formats? Do you even want to know?

If you have answered yes to just one of the above questions, then you are one of those the video retailing industry is going to be targeting ever more persistently throughout the next ten years. Using newspaper ads, TV commercials and direct mailshot techniques, the task of hardware and software manufacturers alike will be to persuade you to part with your money in what is perceived as the fastest-moving international market of all for leisure activity.

But for consumer and manufacturer alike, the problems are many, and accurate forecasting is no easy matter. TV and video is a very lucrative industry, but it is also a very expensive one where each side has to watch carefully to see what the other guy is doing. In the early Eighties, for example, Philips, the European electronics giant, lost a mint when their pioneering 'Laservision' system was rejected by the consumer. Video disc died a death almost overnight because the software price was not right, distribution was poor, the range was too restricted, hardware was expensive and too few of the newly VHS converted population were ready to commit themselves to yet another new home entertainment format.

Yet, within years, sales of CD discs have taken off and boomed to the point where vinyl albums now represent the minority on shelves in record shops. On the strength of this, pre-recorded video disc is now staging a strong comeback in the States and Japan, backed up by solutions to all the above problems and enhanced by a range of new, high-tech features we will look at later.

But how does all this affect the cult s/f fan, who probably sees his/her aspirations little further than perhaps one day owning a complete set of Doctor Who pre-recordings?

Just using that goal as an example, consider the options already open in 1990. There are 'bootleg' copies of almost all Doctor Who episodes widely in circulation throughout fan circles. Quality is variable depending on how many generations down the copy is from the 'master', and how good the copying equipment was in the first place - remember, VHS picture quality used to be the poorest of the three domestically available systems.

Another alternative is to own a multi-standard video/TV system and to persuade pen friends in the States or Canada to record your episodes off-air from the many showings of Doctor Who on PBS channels. The drawback here is the sheer cost of such a project.

And thirdly, there is the 1990 solution; become a BSB subscriber, erect your 'squarrel' (far less unsightly than the current Sky-aimed satellite dishes), and stand by to record the bumper bundle of Doctor Who episodes due on the Galaxy channel from late spring.

So, those are the three options currently open, all of which need the pros and the cons to be weighed up to balance enthusiasm against the cost of the operation. Bootlegging accrues more variety of material (e.g. incomplete stories), and as the master material is usually from source, chances are the episodes will be unedited. But, quality can be poor and, of course, piracy is an illegal act. The BSB satellite solution is the easiest to adopt and will gain you high quality, PAL standard, off-air recordings. But, will the episodes be cut, interrupted by advertisements and punctuated by the station ident appearing annoyingly in the bottom left hand corner, as was the case with SuperChannel transmissions?

The multi-standard alternative is presently the most expensive, and the quality of even off-air NTSC recordings is not that high. However, it does offer the collector a wider variety of programming, including shows that are unlikely to be shown (or shown complete) in Britain, viz: War of the Worlds, the more violent Beauty and the Beast, and even some episodes of Star Trek - The Next Generation (e.g. Conspiracy).

So the number of possible avenues open even now to the consumer already pose bewildering dilemmas. And it is going to get worse in the future. To begin with then, let us try and put matters into perspective by comparing today with the position

back in 1980, and see how events have helped shape the market today.

According to figures held by the Video Trade Association, about 230,000 homes owned a video recorder during Christmas 1979. VHS was the widest available format, primarily because the major TV rental shops, like D.E.R., had elected to go with this format. BETA was its main challenger (because of better picture quality), but there was still room for the two Philips formats (Visionhire, for instance, was solidly behind Philips), and for U-Matic: very expensive but available for the perfectionists.

Most people rented their video recorders in 1980 because purchase costs were still very high. A single blank EMI E-180 tape would have set you back as much as £14.50 in March 1979. Thus, while a lot of people were recording programmes off air, not that many home libraries were then in existence.

The exception tended to be the so-called Cult TV viewers, many of whom had started their collections with the arrival of rentable video machines in 1977/78, and were prepared to pay the high unit cost of tapes to capture the Graham Williams Doctor Whos, the Season 3 and 4 Blake's Sevens, the latter Sapphire and Steels and the reruns of Space 1999 and The Outer Limits.

For the man-in-the-street video owner, his/her main interest was film rental. That had been a big explosion with repercussions that had rocked the big film distributors out of their complacency. Suddenly it was possible to see any blockbuster film in the comfort of your home, freed from the dictates of TV programme planners and unfettered by the agreements which prevented ITV or BBC from showing new movies before five years had elapsed. The potential for profit was enormous and consequently the early eighties witnessed a massive expansion in tape rental outlets. Every high street had two or three specialist dealers with many other shops rushing in to supplement their existing businesses with stocks of rentable video films. At its height it was possible even to rent from racks at the rear of your local greengrocer or newsagent, many of whom were none too fussed about the type of material they sold, or to what age groups. The early eighties became the time of wide-scale video piracy (the majority of video owners in 1981 had seen 'bootleg' copies of E.T. long before its official cinema premiere in England), and of un-regulated dealing in porn tapes and 'video nasties'.

The extension of the Obscene Publications Act, the 1985 Video Recordings Act and the emergence of the British Videogram Association went a long way towards stemming many of the abuses the video consumer industry was prone to in its infancy. All video releases are now certified and stringent laws are in place governing what type of material can be bought legally by consumers.

For these regulating bodies, it has been a remarkable victory, especially considering how the market has grown during the eighties. The 1979 figure of 230,000 domestically housed VCRs has since swelled to 1,300,000, with many homes now possessing two or more machines. Most people now own, rather than rent, their recorders with the big drop in hardware costs having brought shop prices down below £500 for high quality, multi-function VCRs, and the price of four-hour high-grade tapes below the five pound mark.

The software environment has undergone no less a rapid change. Video rental is fast dying a death now that 'sell through' is emerging as the quickest and most profitable means by which film and TV production companies can pass their products on to the consumer. The £9.99 point was the threshold where the public decided the price was right and commenced buying tapes en masse. This sum has since become the industry standard, further stabilising the market and keeping the big retail outlets happy.

These big outlets - Woolworth, W.H.Smith, Menzies and the larger store chains are fairly recent participants in the video arena, only really entering the fray with the establishment of Sell Through, the agreed standard of the £9.99 price-tag, and the final victory of VHS over any other format (even Betamax, which was finally seen off in 1989).

But how have these changes benefitted the cult TV fans? Have they won or lost in their bid to own sets of collected treasures?

Ironically the answer is both. Certainly the variety is there to please all tastes, be it comedy (Rising Damp, Monty Python...), adventure fantasy (The Prisoner, The Avengers...), science-fiction (Doctor Who, Thunderbirds...) or even fondly remembered gems from the nursery (Magic Roundabout, Muffin The Mule and the

If you haven't discovered SECOND DIMENSION, you may just find that the 1990s could be a little dull

SECOND DIMENSION

M C M X C

This will be due, on the whole, to the fact that you won't be aware of the rather good standard of this highly acclaimed DOCTOR WHO magazine (which, incidentally, is printed every month for a rapidly expanding number of people who are suddenly discovering the alternative to DOCTOR WHO fandom of the 80s).

But don't despair! It's not too late! You too can be saved! SECOND DIMENSION has undergone a massive face lift and emerged with a new image to produce a magazine that will take fandom into the 1990s.

If you want a part in The Future Of Fandom, SD will take you there. The first two new-style issues, January and February, are now available at £1.00 each (P&P free). Alternatively, you can catch up on The History Of SECOND DIMENSION with the entire 1989 Volume (12 complete issues) for £10.00. Crossed Cheques/POs payable to THE WHONATICS.

THE WHONATICS

400 Sutton Road, Walsall, West Midlands, WS5 3BA

YOU KNOW IT MAKES SENSE

KALEIDOSCOPE

IS HERE

A DOCTOR WHO CONVENTION WITH A DIFFERENCE !

It will also cover the likes of 'The Avengers' (Old & New), 'Blake's 7', 'The Prisoner', the works of Gerry Anderson and many other shows.

Featuring interviews, both live and on video, special screenings and all the usual convention events.

THE TIME: September 29th & 30th 1990

THE PLACE: Bristol University

Further details and registration forms from:

Kaleidoscope Registrations
7 Overhill
Pill
Nr Bristol
Avon
BS20 0JZ

BE SEEING YOU ?

phenomally successful Watch With Mother). Demand is rising all the time and so prospects continue to be rosy that more and more archives will be opened in the drive to satisfy the hungry consumer.

The bad news is the censorship aspect, a condition under which Britain suffers more than Japan, the USA or most other countries in Western Europe. Many of the Hammer Film videos are cut, movies like The Exorcist and A Clockwork Orange are banned, and even Doctor Who videos like The Talons of Weng-Chiang have been re-edited to remove material likely to offend regulatory bodies.

On the face of it, this strengthens the argument for owning multi-standard TV systems. The censorship debate is unlikely to swing the other way for many years, and with government proposals in hand already to begin jamming satellite signals from de-regulated countries like Italy and France, the British collector will have few options other than to import from abroad. True, customs will still prosecute even a domestic owner from bringing in bootlegs of Driller Killer and Debbie Does Dallas, but you are allowed to import licensed pre-recorded material which, from the States, will net you The Exorcist and A Clockwork Orange unabridged, as well as Doctor Who's The Deadly Assassin (with drowning sequence intact), Honor Blackman episodes of The Avengers and a special version of The Prisoner episode, The Chimes of Big Ben.

This neatly brings us on to the next topic, likely to be of increasing interest to video collectors in the nineties; Expanded Release.

Expanded Release is the notion of offering consumers something new that they will not have seen before either on TV or in the cinema. It is happening even now with the movies Alien and Aliens. Directors Ridley Scott and James Cameron have both been engaged to re-edit their films and put back in scenes that were deleted from the original cinema and TV prints. When Alien is re-released later this year on laser disc, and subsequently on tape, it will have restored the scene where Ripley finds the half-digested bodies of Captain Dallas and Engineer Brett in an air duct. Aliens will have put back an early scene where Newt's family discovers the derelict, to their ultimate cost...

This recent initiative by film distributors owes partly to the great success scored by Lawrence Of Arabia when it was internationally re-released in the cinema last summer with almost half-an-hour's extra never-before-seen footage. That film grossed millions and put the stamp of commercial viability behind the principle of Expanded Releases. Next in line for this treatment will be that already mega-length sixties comedy It's A Mad Mad Mad Mad World.

TV is following suit. MPI's The Chimes of Big Ben is advertised as a lost episode, although in fact it is an early edit of that Prisoner story complete with different title music, some extra scenes and a never-used end graphics sequence. Paramount has released the never-aired Star Trek pilot The Cage and in Britain the second volume of Rik Myall's series The New Statesman boasts about five extra minutes never seen on the TV transmitted prints.

Increasingly research is pointing to a rising tide of interest worldwide in cinema and TV as pastimes. For once, Britain has been a major leader in this field, being the first country in Europe to reverse the seventies trend for declining cinema attendance. Audiences are rising and more theatres are being opened to cater for this demand - including the new 'Multiplex' centres which combine cinema auditoriums, car parks, restaurants and bars under one roof to create all-in-one leisure environments.

This renewed interest in the cinema has gone hand-in-glove with home entertainment innovations. At its most basic, the VCR enabled its owner to go out more frequently, no longer needing to stay home to watch a favourite programme. It was just as easy to set the timer, go out, and watch the recording at a future convenient time. How different would be the TV rating charts, one wonders, if their compilers assessed how many VCRs, as well as people, were watching a given programme?

Another off-shoot from the cinema's renaissance has been an appreciation of presentation quality. The old, drafty 'flea pits' with their slashed seats, faded carpets and crackly speakers are being fast replaced with comfort-designed auditoriums boasting Dolby stereo (even THX stereo in some cases), high luminosity screens and 70mm projection facilities.

The only problem now would seem to be, why don't films seem as good when watched on TV?

That is a valid question, and one the TV and video industry is taking seriously. Consumers do want quality, are prepared to pay for it, and get upset when they don't get it. As an example of the latter, witness the fuss surrounding the recent video release of Who Framed Roger Rabbit? Because of the anticipated high demand for that VT (especially during its Christmas launch period), the distributors chose to use the new SONY system for high speed duplicating; whereby the master player and the hundreds of

inter-linked copying machines run at high speed, enabling a two-hour film to be copied in half an hour. The shops got their stocks for Christmas, but the quality of the recordings was well below par, with drop-outs, picture 'noise' and poor colour alignment reminding one of the old days of VHS quality. If this is to be the industry standard for high-demand video tapes, then don't expect much from this Easter's release of Batman, which will be far more vulnerable than Roger Rabbit due to its predominantly dark environment and low-key lighting.

For buffs, the future is going to belong to disc. Just as audio tapes are inferior to vinyl albums, and vinyl albums to CDs, so video disc will give the superior picture and sound to video tape.

This was still the case in the eighties when Philips launched Laser-Vision. But, for all the reasons already discussed, the product failed.

Now disc has been relaunched in Japan and the USA and is beginning to overtake tape in popularity. The reasons are simple: economy, flexibility and quality. Disc players have dropped in price, they offer digital sound, can play video discs, CD videos and sound CDs, and are smaller than VCRs. The average price of discs is about the same as tape in the USA and offers a far superior picture quality for that money. Even on the NTSC system (jokingly referred to by engineers as 'Never Twice the Same Colour'), the number of lines the laser sends to the TV is higher than that of a standard VHS picture from a PAL VCR.

A noticeable trend with disc-released movies is to show them in 'letter-box' format (i.e. in wide screen so the TV viewer can see the left and right hand sides of the movie picture, normally lost on TV screenings because the station's camera is zoomed in on the central image to fill up the top and bottom of the TV screen). Last year Channel 4 showed both Dune and 2001: A Space Odyssey in letter-box and it is proving increasingly popular with viewers anxious to see the movies as they were shown in the cinema, something the new generation of big screen TVs is also helping to make a reality.

Further attractions of video disc are all the extras they tend to put in. The Japanese 'pressing' of Forbidden Planet, for example, is not only in letter-box format but is also followed by a selection of trailers and promo features, including a section on how the film was made, and an amusing interview between Walter Pidgeon (Dr. Morbius) and Robbie the Robot.

And, as with audio CDs, many video discs come with pre-inscribed index points on the film, enabling the viewer to dial up favourite moments. Thus, in the James Bond movie Goldfinger, if you just wanted to watch the scene where Bond is nearly sliced in half by a laser beam, you simply cue in a pre-set number and the pick-up arm zips to that spot and plays the film from there.

Another plus for video disc is the facility for extra sleeve notes on the packaging. A common complaint to record and video distributors alike is that audio cassettes, CDs and video tapes do not offer anywhere near as much space for sleeve notes as vinyl albums.

Recently some redress has been offered, such as the 32-page souvenir booklet included with the anniversary re-release of The Wizard Of Oz, but for the most part, the small shape of the tape boxes proves prohibitive.

No such problems are faced by the video disc manufacturers, for whom vinyl album-style gatefold sleeves and extra inserts offer additional protection for the product in transit as well as being more eye-catching and an incentive to the buyer.

Trying to estimate the nature of your home viewing in 1990 is, as stated above, exceptionally difficult, and a lot of the projections in this article are based on the assumption that the western world (including Japan) will not slide into a recession during the nineties that will halt consumerism and consumer spending. So, just to round off this attempt to predict the shape of things to come, here is a summary of what we might see between now and the year 2000:

- 1 Home-owned TVs will change size, getting slimmer and lighter but with far wider screen sizes of 34" and above by the end of the century
- 2 Far greater integration with hi-fi sound systems. NICA stereo is just the beginning. By 2000 most homes will have a four-speaker cinema-style sound system
- 3 Video rental shops will be almost obsolete, replaced by Sell Through stores offering pre-recordings cheaper than at present
- 4 The return and subsequent rise of video disc in Britain. Greater proliferation of disc players able to handle all CDs: CD videos and laser-vision discs; probable mass availability of multi-standard machines capable of playing back American and Japanese 'pressings' through PAL TVs
- 5 More extensive release of films on tape and disc in letter-box format. Greater quality of sound and picture resolution.

JEREMY BENTHAM

BUDGET BLAKE

BBC VIDEO are relaunching their 'Blake's 7' range on March 5 at the budget price of £9.99.

The Beginning, Duel and Orac have, until now, only been available at an imposing £25 per tape.

In addition Aftermath - up to now only available in Australia - will be released simultaneously again costing

only £9.99.

All videos will be adorned with the same covers as before.

David Jackson, Producer of BBC Home Entertainment, reveals future plans about the range in our interview with him this issue.

Meanwhile Television Today published this piece in their February 1 issue:



"WHO'S that figure in the space mist?"
"It must be our arch-enemy Servalan!"
"No - it's the man from the BBC coming to blast us into oblivion!"

Television Today recently uncovered this untransmitted piece of dialogue from BBC sci-fi drama Blake's 7, which graced our screens from January 1978 to December 1981, when it sadly became a victim of Auntie Beeb's axe.

Fans anxious for its return have been lobbying the Beeb ever since for a revival of their telly favourite - but still to no avail. Loyal 'Blakies' (or should that be 'Blakettes'?) will be meeting this April to enthuse about the series, plot ways of making Auntie see sense, and also raise quite a bit of money for charity.

Devotees from all over the UK will be travelling up to Chester for this momentous occasion - and there are many set to fly over for the event from Australia, New Zealand and the US, where the space-bound drama is still winning over new converts.

Details of the convention can be obtained from the Space City 1990 Committee, 97 Marsh Way, Millbrook Park, Penwortham Lancs., PR1 9PJ.

Executives at the BBC may snort at this display of fandom, but they might do well to bear in mind the opinions of some keen viewers, rather than swamping them with yet more of the patronising Lawley, Edmonds and Wogan growl.

Pictured are JAN CHAPPELL (Gally), STEVEN PACEY (Tarrant), PAUL DARROW (Avon), MICHAEL KEATING (Vila) and JOSETTE SIMON (Dayna).

COMING SOON: BLAKE'S 7 MERCHANDISE GUIDE

SF BACK ON THE BEEB

THE BBC have lined up a selection of new and old US science fiction series, all of which commenced airing in mid-February.

All episodes of the 60's series The Invaders - last shown on the BBC in 1984 - are being broadcast in BBC2's DEF II slot on Wednesdays, while The Six Million Dollar Man - a former ITV incumbent - is showing on BBC1 on Monday afternoons.

Finally a present-day US series - Quantum Leap (ref:DWB/68) - started airing on BBC2 on February 13 in the peaktime 9pm slot for a six-week run. Starring Scott Bakula as Sam Beckett and Dean Stockwell as Albert (pictured), it follows the



adventures of a hapless participant in a botched time travel experiment which transports him into someone else's body at any point in the last 30 years...

ALL NEW AVENGERS NOVEL

JOHN PEEL, in conjunction with Dave Rogers, is currently writing an all-new Avengers novel based on his own idea

entitled 'Too Many Targets'. It will be released in the US by St.Martin's Press later this year.

FANTASY ZONE FOLDS

FANTASY ZONE - Marvel's much-touted magazine launched as a rival to Visual Imagination's Starburst - has folded after only six issues.

The March issue, currently on sale, is the final one to be published. Problems with the written material is the main reason thus far cited as the cause for the magazine's collapse. Louise Cassell, the editor, has now been moved to Marvel's Sesame Street title.

TV ZONE GOES MONTHLY

Meanwhile Visual Imagination's TV Zone, launched at the same time as Fantasy Zone, has announced its move to a monthly schedule claiming a spectacular reaction to their first three issues.

Vulcan, the fan-produced TV magazine which occasionally foraged into the world of SF, has gone bust after W.H.Smith halved their order without notice.

ROBIN BONANZA

MICHAEL PRAED is being hotly tipped to resume his rôle as Robin of Sherwood in the mooted return of the gothic series. Since Dynasty his career has waned alarmingly, and Jason Connery is apparently not even up for consideration to resurrect the rôle.

While the series' return gets underway, fans will be able to see the old episodes again by subscribing to the BSB satellite station which is scheduled to commence airing in late April.

Meanwhile the proposed new Robin of Sherwood video didn't happen in January (ref:DWB/73) although another release has been promised for the end of February. There appears to be a bit of confusion over what the release will be, however.

The original intention was to feature episodes two and three from the first season. Now rumour has it that The Sword of Wayland and the second 'film' from the second season may be released instead. If this change has occurred it might explain January's lay off. More releases are promised for the future.

BRIEFLY...

THE BACK TO BACK recording of Batman II and III, which was due to commence in February, has been delayed until September amid a crisis centring around the casting. A major blow to Warner Brothers has been the loss of Jack Nicholson who has put career-sense before profit in deciding "I've had enough of the Batman hoopla. Money's not everything, there are other projects that appeal to me more creatively." This despite being offered a package guaranteed to have earned him at least twelve million pounds! A true actor indeed.

Michael Keaton has yet to commit himself to donning his cape and mask again, while Kim Basinger also says she's had enough of the Caped Crusader.

Meanwhile good news on the movie front is that Signorey Weaver is believed to be poised to sign for Aliens III. But how can she possibly top I and II?!

THE PRODUCTION COMPANY behind the BSB space opera 'Jupiter Moon' have examined the entries for the recent series title competition and decided to call the saga...Jupiter Moon!

Primetime/Andromeda intend to produce 150 episodes of drama and intrigue a year, all set on board an educational establishment orbiting one of the moons of Jupiter. It's expected the show will be broadcast three times a week, probably with an episode on a Friday evening. MJ

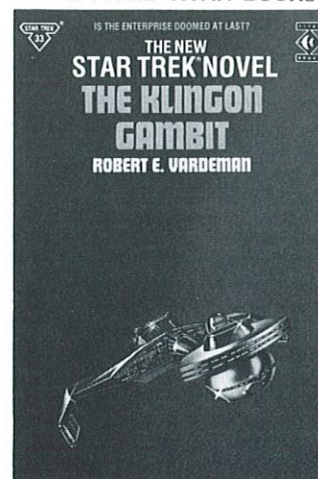
AUG 31-SEP 3: PORTMEIRICON 90. This year's Prisoner/Six of One convention is an all outdoor event free to all. Indoor events are free but open only to Six of One members. The fun all takes place down in Portmeiricon in Wales and details can be obtained by sending a SAE to: The Prisoner Appreciation Society, PO Box 60, Harrogate, or, Six of One, PO Box 172, Hatfield, PA 19440, USA.

TIME SCREEN MAGAZINE will be running its annual tour of locations used in classic TV series of the 50's, 60's and 70's, for the fourth year running. Series covered will include Department 5, The Saint, Randall and Hopkirk, Doctor Who and The Prisoner. The event will be over the weekend of June 22-24 at the hotel used in the The Avengers episode Wish You Were Here? Television historian and The Avengers author Dave Rogers will be attending as will other writers of television books and magazines. As always the highlight of the weekend will be the actual treasure hunt which recreates the Avengers episode Dead Man's Treasure on the actual locations where it was originally shot. Further details available on receipt of an SAE to: Treasure Hunt Four, 88 Edlington Lane, Warrimouth, Doncaster DN4 9LS.

AFTER his successful appearances in two David Wickes television productions - Jack The Ripper and Jekyll and Hyde - Michael Caine is limbering up for his next TV fantasy rôle...as Frankenstein's monster! The company has announced it is to team up with Caine again to recreate Mary Shelley's fantasy classic. MJ

BRENT (DATA) SPINER is reported to have expressed his intention to leave ST:NG after the current (third) US series.

NEW FROM TITAN BOOKS



MARCH 22 sees the release of the first giant 'ST:NG' novel 'Metamorphosis' at £3.99 (cover printed last issue) and the 33rd Star Trek tome 'The Klingon Gambit' (£2.99).

THE LAST GENERATION?

AS REPORTED last issue, 'Star Trek 6: Starfleet Academy' is looking more and more likely, due to an apparent personality split between 'Star Trek' guardian Gene Roddenberry and current movie producer Harve Bennett.

The failure of William Shatner's \$35 million (before promotion and advertising worldwide) epic *Star Trek 5: The Final Frontier* to become profitable (it grossed only around \$51 million in the States), seemed to spell the end of the movie series. It can now be confirmed that Harve Bennett has revived his idea of a few years ago to chronological the adventures of the young James Kirk, Bones and Spock.

RODDBERRY AGAINST

This idea had previously been vetoed by Paramount after *Star Trek 3: The Search for Spock*, when the movie series still had a lot of life left. Now those same executives have positively embraced the idea as a way of carrying on the multi-million dollar enterprise that is *Star Trek*. However, this course means Gene Roddenberry losing control over 'his baby'.

Roddenberry is against the idea and would prefer to continue with the current cast in the movies from the old *Star Trek* TV series. He refuses to back Bennett's idea in any way. Paramount are all for the idea as the film could be made cheaply while carrying on the *Star Trek* movie series.

The film would dispense with all the regular cast (except perhaps in a cameo), an immediate saving of some \$11 million (the \$5.5 million contractual payment to William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy for each film). Paramount have no contractual obligation to ask the actors to repeat their rôles as *Star Trek 5* failed to

Kirk). The fact that *Trek* fans will flock to the movie should guarantee a profit for possibly make a profit.

An all new and mainly unknown cast would allow salaries to be kept down enabling the film to be made on a shoe string (although Back To The Future star Michael Fox is being hotly tipped to portray the young Captain the last of the *Star Trek* movies. After that the idea could be spun off as a TV series, either live action or animated (even cheaper).

POORLY THOUGHT OUT

Gene Roddenberry believes Bennett's script for *Star Trek 6* is poorly thought out and claims that in dispensing with the usual *Star Trek* cast it has no chance of succeeding as a popular, broad appeal film.

Roddenberry is still of the opinion that he 'runs' *Star Trek*, despite only being an advisor on the later films, although Paramount have more respect for Harve Bennett since he's taken the films - since *Star Trek 2: The Wrath of Khan* - on to greater success. Bennett has confirmed that whatever happens with regard to *Star Trek 6*, he himself will be directing it. Paramount have, as yet, not given a go-ahead on the project, although executives are listening carefully to both Bennett and Roddenberry.

Adding to the speculation, *Trek* regular Walter Koenig has said: "They are definitely headed in the direction of producing 'Young Star Trek'".

Whatever happens, we can be sure *Star Trek* will continue in one way or another. The release date of *Star Trek 6* could coincide with the 25th anniversary of the original TV series in the Summer of 1991...

Mark James

SHATNER SUED

In a much-publicised case, William (Kirk) Shatner is being sued for more than £3 million by a former mistress. Twenty-eight year old Vira Montes claims he promised to marry her: "This man put me through hell - I'm going to seek justice!" she announced recently. As if that wasn't enough, Shatner is already involved in a lawsuit with another former lover, 26 year old Eva-Marie Friedrich, though this time only for a modest £1.25 million!



THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

AS HER ARTICLE IN DWB#73 SUGGESTED, THE FUTURE FOR 'STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION' LOOKS ROSY. BUT AS FICKLE T.V. BOSSES UM AND ER OVER THE REST OF THEIR NETWORKED OUTPUT, KATHLEEN TOTH LOOKS AT THE CURRENT U.S. RUNS OF FELLOW S.F. SERIES 'WAR OF THE WORLDS' AND 'BEAUTY AND THE BEAST' AND ASKS WHAT DOES THE FUTURE - IF THERE IS INDEED A FUTURE - HOLD IN STORE FOR THEM...

TWO TELEVISION SERIES seem to have fallen victim to studio politics and network warfare this season. In both cases established programmes were redesigned to meet the demands of executives who were determined to trust their own instincts about what would produce enhanced ratings - while dealing almost contemptuously with fan preferences. One strategy is a clear disaster, the other remains embroiled in controversy.

At the end of the 1988-89 season Paramount Studios decided that its syndicated series *War of the Worlds* was not achieving its full potential as a ratings-grabber and took the unusual step of dumping the entire first season production staff in favour of placing Frank Mancuso Jr. in charge. Mancuso, a veteran of work on both *V* and *The Incredible Hulk*, had won studio approval for

his work on the low budget *Friday the Thirteenth* series.

With the self-confidence of a true entertainment mogul, Mancuso sat down to watch some episodes of the first season and made decisions about changes without consulting any outside information of how the show had been received by viewers. He decided that the show needed to get out in the streets and have pitched battles with a more formidable alien foe, so the first season aliens survived Earth's bacteria after 25 years, only to be executed for incompetence by a second wave of different alien invaders.

In a parallel move, Mancuso also decided to move the human research team out of their secret military base and to kill off two members of the original cast. One victim was to be wheelchair-bound computer expert Norton Drake, a rather under-utilized character who was obviously not adapted to street fighting. Much more shockingly, the other casualty was to be Lt. Col. Ironhorse, the military member of the team and the most popular character in the series. Mancuso indicated later that he had already made his decision before he realised that Ironhorse, played by Richard Chaves, got more fan mail than anyone else on the show!

The humour and inventiveness are totally gone from the second series, replaced by incoherent plot devices and a relentlessly depressing scenario which makes the humans fugitives who have no hope of challenging the aliens for control of a society that is degenerating into barbarism.

War of the Worlds is unlikely to survive this season, but Mancuso seems to have managed to have cloned himself as he is listed as the producer of Paramount's new film *Internal Affairs*. Here's hoping it is successful enough to keep him too busy to be available to save any more television series...

The creators of *Beauty and the Beast* were not removed from the series, although one suspects that that is only because television networks in the USA do not directly produce their own programming. The series has always had an uneasy relationship with CBS, which was conscious of its early critical acceptance and devoted fan following, but always seemed somewhat embarrassed about its fairy tale romanticism and hairy leading man. The fact that CBS has languished as a distant third behind the other two networks for some time made it willing to nurture even marginal ratings for series that had some following or found favour in the executive suites, such as *Paradise*. However, new pressures on CBS programming chief Kim LeMasters last Spring caused the cancellation of series like *The Equalizer* and, momentarily, *Beauty and the Beast*.

The uproar from fans had hardly commenced before the series' creator Ron Koslow announced that CBS had agreed to sanction more episodes and bring back *The Beast* at some point after the start of the new season. However, the price of this reprieve was to be a "retooling" of the series to introduce more action and

danger. Word eventually leaked out that what was taking place was a major change in the whole concept of the series with *Beauty*, in the person of actress Linda Hamilton, scheduled to die after giving birth to Vincent's child. This was a double shock since the biggest controversy for fans through the second season had been whether or not the devoted couple had ever kissed!

It has been pretty consistently maintained that Hamilton wanted to leave the series, but the decision to kill Catherine rather than recast the character was clearly a response to CBS criticism of the slow pace and florid writing which set it apart from other dramas as much as did the grottos of the underground world created by Father. Koslow had insisted that he welcomed this opportunity to explore new possibilities, and Ron Pearlman (Vincent) has said that this permits him to develop the full potential of the character. However, those who enjoyed the original series format had to wonder if it was going to be trashed simply in order to stay on the air.

CBS advertising turned upon the idea that "It's not a Fairy Tale Anymore" (see DWB#74, page 9) and trumpeted the emergence of an enraged Vincent. You could almost hear the network executives sneering "no more poetry" as they dismissed the possible alienation of the show's fans on the grounds that they were not a large enough audience to justify keeping the show on if it remained unchanged.

Beauty and the Beast returned in mid-December with the promise of a twelve-episode "arc" of connected stories.

While the violence is now more graphic and Vincent himself is much more at risk, *Beast* has turned into a bizarre combination of homage to lost love and a gothic gangster tale which is unlikely to have great appeal to the teenage audience CBS was presumably aiming at capturing. Viewing figures went up slightly for the first few episodes, but then settled into a pattern which was similar to last season's. Then, just as TV Guide was hitting the newstands with a major article on the revamping of the series, the axe fell on Kim LeMasters and CBS had to go to great lengths to find anyone willing to take on the job of dragging CBS out of the ratings basement.

The new programme chief Jeff Sagansky acted immediately to create a strong image in replacing the indecisive LeMasters by ordering changes, including cancelling *Beauty and the Beast* as of January 24th. This was the final indignity for fans as that would mean that three of the new episodes would not be shown after all the trouble and anguish that went into creating the new plotline.

The Fox network, a challenger to the big three, was immediately swamped with calls urging it to pick up the series, and a few days later Ron Koslow announced that he is having discussions with several cable networks about the possibility that one of them would not only pick up the existing 52 episodes, but commit itself to producing more. Time will tell if Vincent continues to have as many lives as the household cat...

KATHLEEN TOTH

H.F.SAINT's *Memoirs Of An Invisible Man* reopened the can of invisible worms when it was published in 1987. At the time, as Hollywood rumour had it, Dan Ackroyd was to play Nick Halloway in the film version - the latest in a long line of invisible men, women and cats stretching back to H.G.Wells and beyond. The film, like so many others, has been put on ice, but you can't keep a good invisible man down.

First there was Queen's *I'm The Invisible Man*, which became the pivotal selling point in Channel 4's range of exceptionally good trailers for its all-night screening of *Invisible Man* movies. Now the 70's series with David McCallum (pictured) is showing as part of DEF II on BBC2 (Wednesdays, 6pm), as well as being broadcast on SKY One (Saturdays, 1pm).

The *Invisible Man* is typical 70's kitsch - witness the hairstyles, the clothes, the titles, the storylines. It bears little resemblance to H.G.Wells' original novel, with the Drs Weston, husband and wife scientific team, righting wrongs and combatting evil scientists for the good ol' US of A. Occasional lip service is paid to their quest to find the cure for the permanent invisibility afflicting McCallum. Repeats of the remarkably similar *Gemini Man* can't be far behind. Revel in it.

The *Invisible Man*, though, is only one of the realm of classic science-fiction-cum-horror figures periodically taken out of

OUT OF MYTHBALLS



mythballs and dusted down for a revamping. Given the rejuvenation treatment earlier this year was Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde*. Michael Caine was cast in the lead rôle, but the problems with his acting abilities paled to insignificance beside the

havo played with the plot. As if it wasn't bad enough inventing Jekyll's sister-in-law as his bit on the side, the narrative then did a 'Fly', with Hyde managing to sire the Elephant Man. Quick, forget it, before the inevitable sequel is announced: *Son Of Hyde!*

Hot on Hyde's heels comes a two-part mini-series of *The Phantom of the Opera*, already seen on SKY Movies, but scheduled some time later this year for ITV. This American feature, while not outstanding in any major way, at least manages to stick to the point. And a very dramatic point it concludes on, too. Charles Dance, extending his range of baddies after *The Golden Child* (with Eddie Murphy) and *First Born*, gives the Phantom both a humorous and a romantic edge. But the acting accolades must go to Andrea Ferreol as Carlotta, a most outrageous operatic prima donna with the dreadful singing voice and far more dreadful headgear.

This Phantom did not go in for horror but dwelt on the characters and their situations. Charles Dance, despite the sometimes camp and sometimes entirely absent American accent, manages superbly under a range of exotic masks; no make-up here, none was needed. The production, at some three hours long, gives time to the operatic sections (which is where most film versions fall down) and plays on the funny side of haunted opera houses.



PHOTOS: (Above) 'The War of the Worlds' aliens #1, (right) Ron Pearlman as the Beast and Roy Dotrice as Father

B B C VIDEO INTO THE 1990's

HOW DOES BBC ENTERPRISES INTEND MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF THE NINETIES? BRUCE CAMPBELL AND JEREMY BENTHAM TALK TO BBC HOME VIDEO PRODUCER DAVID JACKSON ABOUT THE FUTURE...

THE BBC is widely regarded as having one of the best archives of television material in the world. Their programmes go back to the early Fifties and encompass every interest from sport to science-fiction. Recently BBC Enterprises, the body responsible for marketing BBC programmes, has undergone a major shake-up and restructuring in a bid to ditch its old 'BBC Un-enterprises' image.

The effort seems to have paid off. New shows are being sold quicker than ever to overseas stations, deals are being struck with commercial satellite companies, BBC material is even being shown on Channel 4, and sales of BBC programmes on video has never been healthier.

David Jackson is a Producer of Home Entertainment for BBC Enterprises. He is part of the team whose job it is to select material from the archives and to guide it through the many stages up to its appearance on the shelves in your local video store.

Armed with a collection of questions D W B readers have raised about BBC Video and its plans for the decade ahead, we spoke to him first about the retailing of archive material. Will it be rental or sell through?

David Jackson: Oh, sell through definitely. As far as the BBC are concerned we will not be restarting a rental label. Indeed, from 1989 onwards our policy has been to aim straight for the consumer.

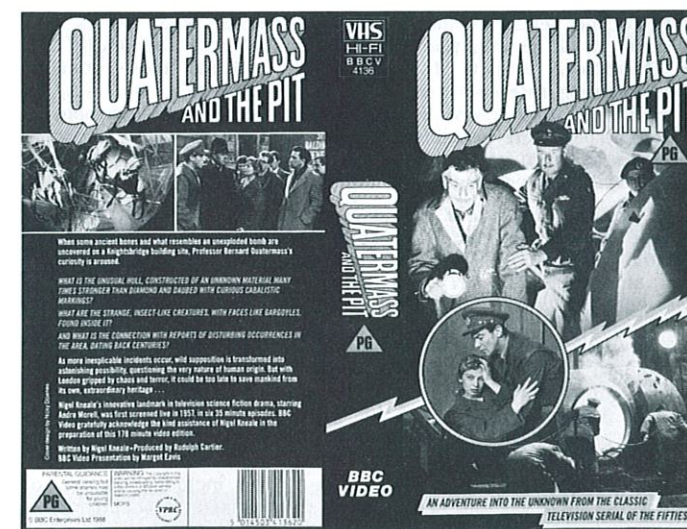
Jeremy Bentham: When was it apparent the corner had been turned?

DJ: Literally just within the last three years. So many more people now possess players and prices have come down so much. All our tapes are now marketed at £9.99 and £7.99, or with double packs maybe as much as £19.99. But certainly when the price came down below £10 for a single tape, that was the big turning point when people started buying them as impulse purchases. Prior to that you were looking at £25 and upwards just for one tape, and frankly, at that price, people were just not interested.

BC: I gather, through the trade press, there is a price rise imminent, to £12.99.

DJ: So I gather, but there is also a lot of resistance to it. I know the big high street outlets, Smiths and Woolworths, are very happy with the £9.99 standard, and we are too because the drop to that level has made such a huge difference in sales.

JB: What determines if a tape is going to come out as a one volume set, like 'Quatermass and the Pit', or two volumes like 'The Daleks'?



DJ: A lot of people have rung us up about that, and it is true that Quatermass is enormously good value compared to The Daleks. The truth of the matter is that we knew Quatermass would not really sell an enormous amount, so we knew we would almost be discouraging those few people who did want to buy it if we put the episodes out across two tapes and charged £20 for them. With Doctor Who, none of the tapes quite get into the

best seller bracket although they all sell fairly well. We need to sell upwards of 20,000 copies of each tape if we are to really make any money from it. The Daleks did get into the charts, and to date that tape has sold only 15,000 copies (or 30,000 tapes). For our best sellers, we do look at figures upwards of 100,000. That is one of the reasons we are starting to release 6-parters over two tapes. It is simply so that, by maximising the profits, we can continue to bring out more.

JB: Was it a big surprise then that something as old as Watch With Mother has become your biggest ever seller?

DJ: I think that shook everybody. It was one of those 'off the wall' ideas where nobody expected much of a return, and yet it tapped into a kind of nostalgia market that no-one even knew was there, and certainly not there to that extent. At the same time, there was a kind of 'yuppie culture' around then with money just to indulge itself, and to a degree it was they who latched onto Watch With Mother as a kind of fad.

BC: What process have you adopted in selecting 'Doctor Who' stories for release? Do you, for example, pay close attention to the fan press?

DJ: We do. We look at the survey results and top ten episodes for each Doctor and so on. In fact, just recently in the Radio Times, there was a letter from somebody suggesting what the next tapes we might bring out are. We take note of those kinds of things all the time. Obviously we're circumscribed a bit by clearances and contracts so that we can't always bring out just whatever episodes we'd like, and the other thing we're restricted by is the fact that not everything is still in existence at the library.

BC: Is there a possibility of more recent Doctors, like Peter Davison, coming out on video in the near future?

DJ: Yes, that's definitely something that will be happening soon. At the moment we felt that most of the interest and most of the pressure from fans has been for the earlier Doctors, but certainly we'll be bringing out the more recent Doctors too.

JB: Stemming from the success of the aforementioned Watch With Mother video, would you say BBC Enterprises has identified any particular types of buyers that it aims at when selecting material for release?

DJ: Not really. There are certain areas of the market that are easy to identify; childrens videos is one, sports videos are another. The sci-fi end of the market is a part we have found to be lucrative. The buffs do tend to buy fairly regularly, which makes our job of estimating distribution to a degree easier. With general interest material like comedy and drama, it is very difficult to know quite who is going to buy a specific programme. Lots of our classic dramas, like The Six Wives Of Henry VIII, which everyone said is the best of its kind, have not sold as well as expected. Perhaps this is because it is not the kind of material people want to watch again and again, or perhaps when you have more than one version available, like Pride And Prejudice, people will prefer the £4.99 Hollywood version with Laurence Olivier to a £9.99 BBC Classic Serial.

JB: So 'Blake's Seven' outsells The Forsyte Saga?

DJ: I would say so, although Blake's Seven is a difficult one to use in comparison. All the Blake tapes are going to be re-released this year at a lower price, even though they did fairly well at their original higher price.

BC: When do you anticipate a brand new 'Blake's Seven' video coming out after the release of 'Aftermath' in March?

DJ: It depends really on how Aftermath and the re-releases sell. There are no positive plans for future Blake's Seven tapes at the moment but we will be monitoring how these ones do once they come out and then we'll take a decision on the strength of public interest. If we do some more, again that's all dependent on whether the stuff still exists in a complete form.

JB: Do you find that a series being shown on television encourages sales of a related video or detracts from it?

DJ: Yes, surprisingly enough the day after something has been repeated on television, people rush out and buy the video.

BC: Is that why 'Black Adder II' sold so well, because 'Black Adder IV' was on close to Christmas?

DJ: Yes. It's Black Adder people are interested in, not any one particular series. We do have plans to bring out all the Black Adder programmes on video, although we will hold back on Black Adder IV for a while, possibly until the next repeat.

BC: I thought I read somewhere that Rowan Atkinson had gone on record as saying he did not want to see 'Black Adder I' released because he did not consider it very funny?

Revolving statues, voices from the air, booby-trapped props and, most notably, itching powder in Carlotta's wig were comic elements in an otherwise serious production. It manages an almost perfect balance between Lloyd Webber's musical extravaganza (shortly to be made into a movie) and the Robert Englund gross-out horror version coming soon to a cinema near you. Watch the schedules for it.

When it comes to casting the next version of The Invisible Man, it will no doubt come down to a choice between Michael Caine (stock favourite at 5 to 1) and Charles Dance (rank outsider at 100 to 1).

Still undergoing updating is the old dark folk myth - Beauty and the Beast (LWT, Fridays at 11.30pm). ITV has at last got round to screening - in the middle of the night - those episodes it deemed unfit to be shown in the early evening. The first in the late night run was an early episode, entitled Dark Spirit, from the first season featuring voodoo magic and creepy crawlies galore. The race phobia of spiders, snakes and other bugs put paid to this episode previously, but it was well worth waiting for and it was a delight to see the old style Beauty and the Beast made for dramatic ends rather than to please the fans. Catch it while you can.

Another updating, but one wishes they

hadn't bothered, is The Munsters Today (ITV, Saturday at 12.30pm). One can imagine the attractions of a TV company of updating an old classic now the subject of heavy revivalist interest, but this remake is dire, dire, dire. The characters are a pale shadow of their former selves; nobody, but nobody, could possibly do Herman Munster as well as Fred Gwynne used to. This is the sort of dross that has given American television such a bad name in the past. It's scripting by numbers, with every scene change marked by a shot of that old dark house that once looked so forbidding in black and white. If you've any sense, skip it.

SUSAN POLAN

'THE AVENGERS' MOVIE UPDATE

FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST all appears comparatively quiet regarding Weintraub Entertainment's proposed feature film version of 'The Avengers'.

The rights leased to Australian actor Mel (Mad Max) Gibson expired in December '88, though they were apparently renewed almost straight away and Weintraub still consider the project extremely viable and definitely still on!

The lack of current information exists because nothing is actually happening, which is typical for the film industry.

Genuine Avengers aficionado Mel Gibson, who boasts all 83 filmed episodes of the series in his personal video collection, still intends to produce a feature-length movie based on the highly successful Avengers format. Media sources in January '89 claimed that he longs to portray his adolescent hero - the suave John Steed. The only new piece of information to surface predicts American actress Sigourney Weaver as the possible candidate for the female partner rôle.

However I can exclusively reveal that Weintraub seriously consider the strong possibility of The Avengers becoming a series of movies! Obviously this depends on box office reaction to the first, unless Weintraub are extremely impressed with the initial offering and sanction Avengers: 2 without waiting for financial return. Executives look upon the project as a rival to the Eon Productions/United Artists James Bond 007 extravaganzas which really shines a considerably different light on the matter. For me as for countless others, The Avengers is basically a British thing with Steed and Co putting paid to the crazed schemes of mad scientists and revolutionary forms of advanced weaponry - The Avengers is not Bond!

Alternatively I'm excited at the prospect of seeing The Avengers: The Movie. The adventures would now, undoubtedly, be worldwide though hopefully that special charm and style will remain intact, propelling our heroes into a different sphere where, with a little luck, they will amass international recognition and collect immeasurable success resulting in more films. Thus one cannot help but speculate on certain aspects...

Something of this calibre would involve an enormous budget, anything up to £50 million. Plus the complexity and overall size of the production would require vast studio space, hence either Goldcrest Elstree (where the Rigg/Thorson episodes were filmed) or Pinewood (home of The New Avengers) would have to be utilized. Being an Anglo-American venture



I assume that location footage will be necessary in both countries, with an additional international location thrown in for exotic requirements.

So the film will have Steed...or with the passing of time will he be Steed's son? Who will the female partner be? Mrs. Peel? Her daughter? Daughter in law? Niece? Or will we eventually meet Charly (the original name for the The New Avengers girl) or Caruthers, a character invented for the unnamed CBS Avengers TV movie, or a completely original characterization?

Motor vehicles have always played a special part in adding extra style to The Avengers, so I propose that Steed resume driving a Bentley, though now an up to date Mulsanne Turbo. Meanwhile his assistant should continue the tradition of Avenger girls using sleek two-seater sports cars - perhaps a powerful thoroughbred Morgan Plus 8 convertible.

Obviously the major question centres on Mel Gibson's involvement. Perhaps he would be better advised at assuming the rôle of producer since his previous film rôles have depicted anything but the perfect English gentleman. Several alternative choices of my own for the plum rôle of Steed would include up-and-coming actor Ben (Jewel In The Crown) Cross who certainly has the acting ability and looks right for the part. Jeremy Irons is flavour of the month in Hollywood after several highly-acclaimed films including The French Lieutenant's Woman, while internationally famous Michael York would probably be most acceptable to the Americans and would be capable of carrying off the comedy/thriller approach as demonstrated in The Three (and) Four Musketeers, as well as more dramatic high adventure as in Zepplin. Pierce Brosnan, who narrowly missed out on becoming the latest 007, is apparently considering a rival Bond project which will probably fail to see the light of day, but the part of Steed might appeal - and a series of Avengers films could well offer the challenge of beating Bond at his own game! An exceptional actor, Brosnan shone in the four seasons of Remington Steele where he played the title character, exhibiting many similarities to the John Steed of old. Further candidates include Simon MacCorkindale, Charles Dance and Australian actor Sam Neill.

For true blue Avengers enthusiasts there will only ever be one Steed, Patrick McNee. But at sixty-three Weintraub cannot honestly recast him as the Steed they presumably envisage - a high tech, fast moving, all action, woman chasing, do the minor stunts and fight scenes yourself Steed! The Avengers: The Movie must have appeal to the international movie-going public in order to succeed, and as such may well be minus McNee altogether, though ever the impeccably mannered gent he generously wishes Gibson well if and when he interprets the character.

I hold high hopes for The Avengers movie if and when it finally gets off the ground, and am anticipating something fresh and invigorating.

MICHAEL RICHARDSON

DJ: That's right. Rowan did originally make that objection, but our opinion is that the series as a whole is of such a high standard that recently we have managed to get that problem sorted out...

JB: So what difficulties do you have to overcome getting a programme out of the archives and into the stores?

DJ: The major problem is invariably getting the clearances, because with anything made more than about four or five years ago the artists were not contracted for video rights, so you have to go back to their agents and virtually renegotiate from scratch - and with something like I, Claudius you are talking about a massive job of clearing and re-contracting all those people again, even the extras and the musicians. And if just one person refuses permission, you can't do it unless that rôle is small enough and inconsequential enough to be edited out. With the original Blake's Seven videos, they were cutdown versions anyhow and so there were some clearances we were able to avoid just by editing it so that those characters did not appear in the video.

JB: The whole question of editing programmes is a very complex one. Does BBC Enterprises operate under any clearly defined criteria, other than circumventing clearancing?

DJ: Initially we have to consider whether the programme is too long. If you were talking about a drama series, say in ten one-hour parts, it is just not going to be a very viable proposition expecting someone to shell out for four videos, unless it is such a huge blockbuster - like The Forsyte Saga. But even then, that set comprises thirteen tapes, so you have to ask how many people are likely to have a yard of shelf space available to hold all those tapes and how often are they likely to watch it? So here we would consider some editing to make a drama more commercially attractive - at the very least chopping off beginning and end title sequences of the middle episodes.

BC: But you no longer do that with 'Doctor Who'?

DJ: No. This is partly again due to people ringing us up and complaining when we did that. Our policy with Doctor Who is now to include every episode with its beginning and end credits. That will also be the case with any new Blake's Seven episodes we bring out on tape, although not with the existing ones being re-released this year, because frankly it would be too expensive to go back and re-do those videos. But yes, we do react to public pressure and the days are now gone when we would try and produce a shortened 'video version' of a Doctor Who or a Blake's Seven story just to fit it onto one tape. In future we will put longer stories across two tapes.

JB: At the other end of the scale, there is the question of expanded releases; re-editing to put more footage onto the video release than was shown on television.

DJ: This is something companies are looking at now because it makes the product more attractive. We're starting to do it with the tape of a joint Channel 4 production we did with Zenith about the race horse Desert Orchid. That video will be an expanded version, with more than on the TV broadcast shown on Channel 4.

JB: But can you do that with dramas and comedies?

DJ: Only in the cases where the original tapes and film survive which, after three years, is no longer the case.

JB: So with a programme like 'The Curse of Fenric', where virtually five episodes worth of material had to be chopped down to four, have you the power to go in and say, "We would like to do this as an expanded release", and re-engage directors, editors and musicians to restructure the story?

DJ: We could indeed do that, although we would have to look and see how much work had been done on it already. It would depend how early the decision was made to chop down the programme in the first place. For example, if there was no sound-on-film for a scene, we could not go out and reshoot the film.

BC: One thing I have noticed. Compared to other companies, and considering the vast library you have to choose from, the BBC has in the past released fewer titles on a per month basis.

DJ: That came down to the sheer number of bodies available to work on projects. Our output now matches our competitors and is increasing all the time.

BC: But at the same time, the market for sell through titles is estimated to be increasing at a rate of 100% each year.

DJ: And that is almost the rate, you will find, by how much we are increasing our output.

JB: Bearing in mind the stringent rules the British Videogram Association and the British Board of Film Censors lays down about video content, is censorship a problem for BBC material? I noticed, for example, a clever piece of editing on 'The Talons of Weng-Chiang' to remove the actual shot of the cabbie being murdered.

DJ: This has happened because the attitude of the film censors has changed. A lot of what was considered acceptable in the

Sixties and Seventies is now deemed too violent or too offensive for viewers in the Eighties and Nineties. Television, like the cinema, has veered away from graphic scenes of sex and violence to a more family-orientated environment. That is why safety has become a key issue, especially where there is the chance videos will be watched by kids - as a lot of them are. A lot of children's programmes in the Sixties show children handling scissors or striking matches, and this is the kind of thing the BBFC just does not want to see anymore. So that is where we are more or less obliged to do some editing if we want to get a 'U' certificate.

BC: 'Talons' has a 'PG' certificate doesn't it?

DJ: Yes, and so does one of the new ones, An Uearthly Child, because of the fight scene with the cavemen. We have not edited that at all because we have the 'PG' certificate and we don't believe that will be a video many children will want to watch.

BC: On the strength of sales, are you far more prepared than before to dip into your vintage programmes for the sell through market?

DJ: I think so. There is a general realisation now that people are genuinely interested in older stuff. As well, so many people have video recorders these days, so there is a good chance they will have recorded for themselves the newer programmes but won't have something older, like I, Claudius or Not Only But Also.

BC: Is it a major problem that so much has been junked from the archives?

DJ: That is a very real and constant source of frustration to us, although it is remarkable how much material is still turning up. At present the BBC is attempting to bar code every holding in its vaults, which basically means it is undertaking a vast stockcheck. And quite a lot has been turned up which, for one reason or another, was misfiled. Peter Cook and Dudley Moore's Not Only But Also series we found to our dismay how little had survived when we went to compile a video. There was some material in black and white, but virtually none of the colour episodes existed bar a few film clips. We have managed to salvage enough for a tape, but there is no way we will put it out as The Best Of..., more likely as The Best Of What Remains. That tape is ready to go now, subject only to a few more contracts being signed.

BC: Are you happy about releasing black and white comedies, or even black and white episodes of comedies where some colour episodes are available already on video, such as Dad's Army or Steptoe & Son?

DJ: Again yes. On the whole, I believe we have reached the stage where people have got past the stigma that was attached to black and white. If anything, colour video is so established that no-one considers it anymore, whereas black and white seems to be attracting a cache of appeal all its own.

JB: Are the quantity of sales of black and white and colour videos that similar?

DJ: I'm not aware of any great disparity. People buy now for content rather than format.

BC: From the Seventies there are some 'Doctor Who' stories that now exist in a combination of colour and black and white (i.e. 'The Daemons', 'Planet of the Daleks'). Would these stand a chance of being released in their current format?

DJ: I think in those cases we would certainly try to get hold of the colour prints if possible because I think it would probably discourage us from releasing them in that form until we thought we'd explored every avenue.

JB: Do you see the future of videos as just being sold as they are - a tape in a black box - or do you feel they could be better presented?

DJ: I am personally very keen on the idea of doing souvenir boxes, booklet inserts or some kind of sleeve notes like you have with records. The problem, though, is at the retail end. The stores are not very keen on taking an item which deviates from the standard packaging for videos. You have to give them a very strong argument even to do a double-package or a boxed set. They will always tell you they don't have the room on their racks for boxes or specially packed videos. That said, Warners did well this Christmas with their boxed gift sets so this is a field we will be actively pursuing for the future, plus including books or booklets. I think all videos fall down on the lack of documentation that comes with them. A lot of people, particularly with older programmes, would like to know original transmission dates, original cast lists, background information and so on.

BC: Will artwork covers be continuing regardless of whether the story featured is black and white or colour?

DJ: Yes, I think the tendency has been towards artwork, and I think it's quite nice to have a piece of proper artwork on the cover, but ultimately it's for the graphic designers to decide

whatever they think is the most appropriate. Obviously if there is a very strong photograph or something very good from the production end then we'd use it, but in a lot of cases it's very difficult to get a good quality photograph that will reproduce well enough on the cover, which is why it's gone the way of artwork.

JB: The USA has recently gone over to a system of really cheap packaging for their tapes; little more than a cardboard slipcase...

BC: It's happening in a small way over here too.

DJ: We are still actively resisting that. Indeed one recent change we have made is going over to using transparent cases, so that when you open the box you will be able to see the back of the cover. At present, that is just being used for advertising, but on an up-and-coming golf video, for example, we are printing a very detailed list of contents and technical information.

JB: Tape quality is a factor more people seem to be considering when buying videos these days. Some recent popular film releases have suffered a degraded signal through using high-speed copying techniques. Is this a likely avenue for BBC Enterprises?

DJ: Duplication is a big problem for everyone because of the shortage of duplication companies. We try, wherever possible, to ensure our master tapes are up to transmission quality. Even with black and white we try to remove scratches and enhance the picture to bring it up to the equivalent of transmission quality, although with old VT you do have the problem of drop-out which you can't do much to cure.

JB: Both Australia and America have put out 'Doctor Who' titles ahead of yourselves, with 'The Talons of Weng-Chiang' and 'The Deadly Assassin' respectively. Presumably that is with BBC Enterprises' full agreement?

DJ: Yes, we license them when they come to us with a request to produce a BBC video, although with Lionheart in America, they are associated directly with BBC Enterprises. I think you would be surprised at how much material is issued abroad that doesn't get issued here, drama particularly. Drama just does not sell over here, but does very well abroad, perhaps because people feel the quality of BBC drama is different to what they see on their local TV station, and so there is more of a market.

JB: So we won't be seeing much more drama output from BBC Video?

DJ: You will, but probably not through the rental stores. One recent development, which we've got a lot of hope for, is marketing through book shops. BBC Books will have a video stand in bookshops promoting our classic dramas.

BC: What about libraries?

DJ: Maybe, but then you are back into the rental business and rental agreements where matters could get complicated.

BC: Do you still have problems then with Equity and the Musician's Union?

DJ: There is a constant move forward now rather than backwards. It's reaching the stage where everybody has grasped the fact that video and satellite broadcasting is not going to go away; that old programmes are going to appear one way or another. We are certainly encouraged by a recent move towards majority voting, where if just one cast member in a series objects to being seen in a video, he can be out-voted by the majority wishes of everyone else, and we can bring the video out.

BC: One criticism I have, from reading the trade papers as I do, is a sad lack of advance information on the sell through trade of forthcoming BBC releases. Very often I'm reading about them when they're actually out in the shops. Surely the trade press is your window both to the 'rackers' and to the independent video dealers?

DJ: I have to say I agree with you completely. It is something we are trying to address; that we're not publicising enough and we're not targeting enough. Part of the problem is the big and very sudden expansion of the sell through market which has taken everyone by storm. Again we are aware of the problem and hopefully, by taking on more staff as we are doing, we are improving. Our railway videos we are now promoting through Train Spotters Weekly and things like Doctor Who and Blake's Seven through magazines like D.W.B. But it is something we should be doing more of, and I'm sure we will.

JB & BC: David Jackson, thank you.

THE LAUNCH of the first and last black and white 'Doctor Who' adventures by BBC Video on February 5th spearheads a year of monochrome releases designed to be snapped up by nostalgia buffs hopeful of recapturing the flavour of bygone years, those simply curious enough to put John Nathan-Turner to the test and determine for themselves whether the memory really does cheat, and of course young people (at least 26 years of age and under) who simply have never had the luxury to witness the magic of monochrome 'Who', bar the brief 1981 repeats season, NFT screenings and, of course, the pirate video network which only the minority have access to.

The first thing to grab the eye, however, are the striking new-look artwork covers by the ever-popular Alister Pearson. His An Uearthly Child rendition is particularly effective and similar in concept to pop group Queen's most recent album sleeve The Miracle. Being black and white stories BBC Video policy dictated that Alister use very little colour in these covers to avoid deceiving the public, and An Uearthly Child overcomes this limitation very well whereas The War Games could have done with some brightening up, though again a very well-conceived work. These are also the first Who releases to be packaged in clear, as opposed to black, boxes with the reverse side of the insert sleeve displaying mini-pics of the releases in the range to date. Hopefully BBC Video will utilize this extra space in future for technical notes, credits and maybe even an extra still or

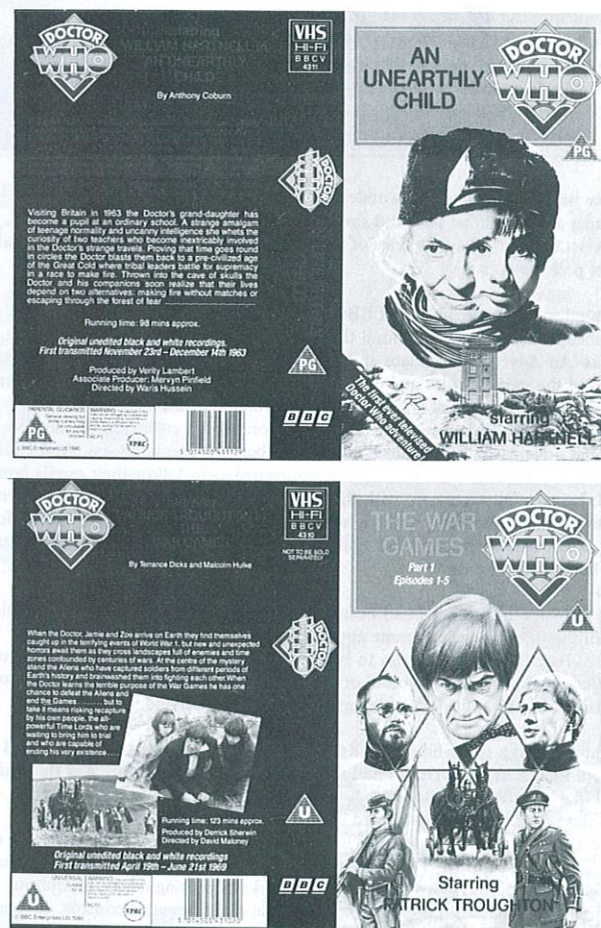
two.

The videos themselves are, thankfully, completely unedited, retaining all opening and closing titles, though in the case of the double-pack The War Games this is not necessarily a bonus. Having tried countless times in the past to attempt to sit through all ten episodes of this yawn (sorry, yarn) and failing each time, I was at least obliged to try again seeing as how BBC Video had the courtesy of supplying DWB with a review copy. This time I'm rather chuffed to say I struggled as far as half way into episode five before my fast-forward button came into play. I rejoined the story with episode nine at what appeared to be exactly the same point in the plot at which I'd left it in episode five, although here, of course, the action does start to pick up all the way to the very end. But one does wonder what the non fan will make of it - and whether the experience will put him/her off Who tapes forever. Hopefully they'll have watched An Uearthly Child first!

BBC Video do seem to have learned from their past mistakes and are doing the fans proud with their most recent releases. If a criticism must be levelled, it is that tape one of my copy of The War Games was far grainier in picture quality than tape two indicating that short cuts are being taken at the duplicating stage (i.e. taking copies from copies instead of from the master).

Otherwise full marks BBC Video, and roll on May's releases!

Gary Leigh



MEMORY CHEATS: 'An Unearthly Child'



A police box is a concrete and wooden structure, normally blue, used by city policemen as a telephone post and shelter. Why am I stating the obvious? Well, AN UNEARTHLY CHILD, the first story of the new series DOCTOR WHO, features a rather unusual police box...

Being used to the standard fare of BBC drama - cops and robbers, kitchen sink angst, medieval derring-do - I found the first ten minutes of this story confusing. Billed as 'An Adventure in Space and Time', the story began in a pedestrian manner that belied the swirling titles and eerie, doom-laden theme. I found little to interest me in the lack-lustre tale of a strange schoolgirl and her nosy teachers. The 'mystery' of Susan Foreman seemed nothing more than a collection of anecdotes that could quite easily be explained away by puberty or mental illness. And I can't imagine many teachers who would be so concerned as to follow their pupils home. Indeed, I was in full agreement with the unpleasant old man who seemed to own the junkyard. Ian and Barbara's reasons were nothing more than a shallow excuse for prying. Then again, what was that police box doing in a junkyard, and why would Susan have hidden inside?

At this point I realised that I had been the victim of one huge con-trick. The relevance of the title sequence became apparent as the false façades collapsed like ninepins. Barbara had had reason to be afraid of meddling in things 'best left alone'. The police box, normally a symbol of sanctuary, was actually beyond human comprehension. Ian and Barbara had stumbled into... wonderland.

Brought up on the spaceships of FORBIDDEN PLANET, THIS ISLAND EARTH and THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, I had to do a double take. Not only was this Ship shaped like an ordinary police box, but it was bigger inside than out. Although Susan and her grandfather attempted explanations, I let their pseudo-scientific twaddle about a 'relative dimension' wash over me as I willingly suspended my disbelief. The interior of this 'TARDIS' (the name of the Ship) was as breathtaking as the concept behind it. High white walls and banks of pulsing relays, ubiquitous backlit circles, anachronistic *objet d'art*... and the central control console, covered in high-tech instrumentation and surmounted by a crystal column. Surely this was the set for a film, not a television series?

Ian and Barbara, the meddling innocents, were faced with a situation beyond their ken. Naturally, they assumed that they had wandered into some bizarre psychological conspiracy engineered by their pupil's cantankerous grandfather. 'Your arrogance is almost as great as your ignorance' was a typical insult hurled at Ian, yet it is the Doctor who is both arrogant and ignorant. Arrogant, because he assumes that he has the right to decide the fate of the teachers; ignorant because he disregards their mental anguish. When Susan attempts emotional blackmail to sway her grandfather, he reacts like a spiteful child. Knowing that Susan is fond of Earth, and

especially of Coal Hill School, he strikes out and takes it away. Or rather, he takes them away...

The closing minutes of episode one ratify the Doctor's fantastic tale. He and Susan were aliens, exiles from a world distant in both space and time. In a spectacular take-off, accompanied by a vortex of patterns and raucous engines rising to an ear-splitting whine, the police box soared away from London, 1963. But to where?



If I have been overdescriptive, indulge me. This first episode had me hooked. The climax - an alien landscape, a crooked shadow falling across the incongruous police box - had me craving for more. What a pity.

Initially I was satisfied. Hoping that the occupants of the TARDIS wouldn't be knocked unconscious on every flight (I assumed that this was due to their hasty departure), I was tantalised by the concept of a vehicle capable of altering its appearance to blend in with its environment, and amused that this particular facility had gone wrong on this alien world. Unfortunately, the world wasn't quite alien enough.

The next three episodes left me with a very sour taste in my mouth. The subtle psychological horror of part one drew its substance from the culture shock of Ian and Barbara when faced with the unimaginable. Subsequent episodes attempted to contrast this with the introduction of even more primitive beings: cave dwellers, desperate to rediscover the secret of fire before the Ice Age destroyed them all. Perhaps we were meant to compare Ian's rationalisation of the TARDIS with the primitives' understanding of the Doctor's pipe. Or maybe not. To be honest, I found this 'adventure' less than satisfying.

I can only assume that parts two, three and four were intended to be a low-key story, enabling us to become familiar with the characters of the four travellers. Yet what other explanation can there be? After their initial capture by the Tribe of Gum, the time travellers led us on a ponderous runaround with a less than wholesome resolution. Not enough action, too many words. Since all efforts were directed towards the regular cast, the supporting rôles were thinly drawn and unconvincing in the extreme. Clichéd language was coupled with unrealistic costumes to produce a set of cavemen straight out of a B-movie. Considering that the Tribe were on the brink of starvation, they seemed a pretty healthy lot to me. Well-fed and well-groomed, with prehistoric perms and capped teeth, they evoked no sympathy from me over their plight.

Yet the regular characters were finely drawn. Unfortunately. Ian and Barbara came off best, but only by the thinnest of margins. Perhaps because of her liberal arts background, Barbara made no attempt to rationalise the magic, but simply accepted it as a fact of life. Although obviously frightened, she held an inner strength that made her quite likeable. Ian Chesterton possessed no such redeeming features. A stereotyped science teacher, he sought answers that he would never have understood to questions that he could never have asked. Anything that couldn't be neatly pigeonholed was closed out, ignored. I can't see Ian surviving very long in the infinite reaches of time and space.

* STAR * RATINGS *	
SCRIPT	****
ORIGINALITY	****
DIRECTION	****½
ACTING	****
SETS	***½
COSTUMES	***½
ADVERSARIES	****
SPECIAL EFFECTS	****½
OVERALL STORY	***½
TOTAL =	71%

VAROS Issue 2
Out now with all the latest news and articles on the sixth incarnation of the Doctor.
Included is Part 1 of our Guide to the Guest Stars, Attack of the Cybermen review and production credits and Merchandise for sale.
To obtain your copy send 50p coinage and an A4 SAE to:
Varos 2,
84 Ladysmith Road,
Etruria,
Stoke on Trent,
ST1 4BX.
Issue One is still available.

HAND OF OMEGA
The 'Doctor Who' Newsletter
Issue 4, Jan'90

Contents include: News, Merchandise, The Movie, Fiction, Artwork, Episode Guide to the Pertwee era plus an article on an abandoned Season 25 script...

To order send cheque/PO for £1.30 payable to P.Berry to:
118 Scartho Road,
Grimsby,
South Humberside,
DN33 2AX.

Special offer to new readers - send a loose 1st class stamp with your order and receive entirely free Issue 3 of Hand.

PRODIGES
EDITED BY A. MURRAY & D. BROWN

Issue 3 February
a season 26 special featuring an interview with actor Christopher Bower, a survival location report, season review, plus timely part 3, news, reviews and season 15 index etc.
available mid Feb
£5p plus a5 sae



BUY IT!!
IT'S
ACE!!
46 CAMPSBIE, LIVINGSTON,
WEST LOTHIAN, SCOTLAND.

As for Susan, the 'unearthly child' behaved like a retarded ten year old, screaming at the slightest provocation. She was meant to be a representative of a highly developed civilization - indeed, the Doctor had earlier mentioned the abilities of the 'children of my world' - yet she was hardly a good ambassador, sulky and emotional, lost without her grandfather to protect and cosset her. But what a person to rely on: spiteful, arrogant, selfish... The Doctor lacked almost all of the more pleasant social graces. No wonder Susan was so screwed up, travelling from world to world with such a crotchety old bugger. I assumed from the title that the Doctor would be the hero of the series, but I find it hard to have faith in a vicious OAP quite capable of murdering another person because they might slow him down. Any hopes I had of his mellowing as the story progressed evaporated as his more unlikeable characteristics were accentuated. I can't see him becoming very popular.



As the four travellers escape the screaming cavemen and their perms and reach the safety of the Ship once more, I couldn't rid myself of the feeling that it had all been rather a waste of time. An outstanding first episode had been ruined by three more of mediocre quality, that showed the 'heroes' as flawed and unpleasant. The innovative concepts of the TARDIS and its possibilities were put aside in favour of a second rate story that would bore all but the easily pleased.

To me, science fiction is a broad canvas that spans anything from historical romance to grand space opera. AN UNEARTHLY CHILD fits quite comfortably in this spectrum, yet it is not bizarre enough to begin a series with. DOCTOR WHO should have been born in a blaze of robots, monsters and aliens, not healthy *homo habilis*. Oh well, perhaps next time. If only there was some way to change the lead actor...

LIONHEART

BBC TV FANTASY ENTHUSIASTS CLUB

LIONHEART

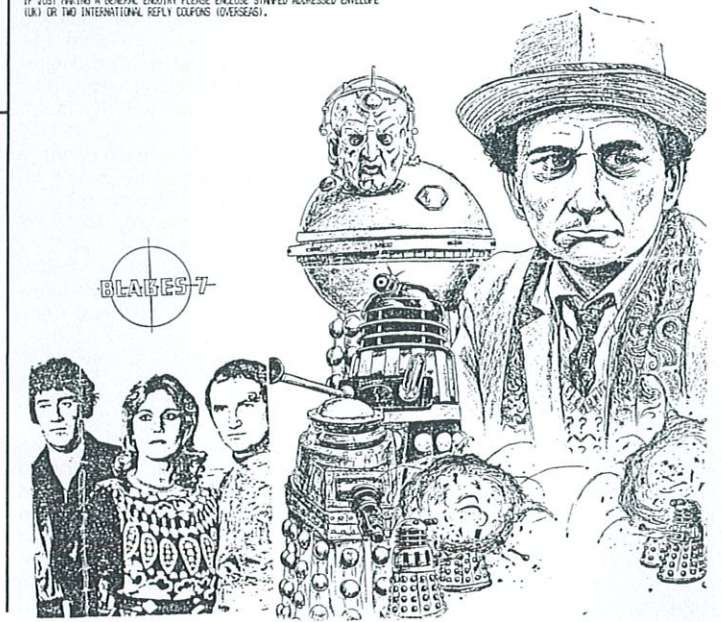
THE CLUB FOR ENTHUSIASTS OF BBC FANTASY SERIES SUCH AS DOCTOR WHO, BLAKES 7, RED DWARF, STAR CUPS, HITCH HIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY, TRIPPODS, THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA AND MANY MORE.

FULL YEARS MEMBERSHIP (AT THE RATES INDICATED BELOW) ENTITLES THE MEMBER TO SIX NEWSLETTERS A YEAR, EACH FILLED WITH INFORMATION, ARTICLES AND NEWS ON THE ABOVE SERIES PLUS MUCH MORE IF YOU WISH TO JOIN OR WANT FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE WRITE TO:

KEITH R. GOOD,
33 ROSSIE PLACE,
EDINBURGH,
MIDLOTHIAN,
EPT 9PL,
SCOTLAND,
GREAT BRITAIN.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES:
U.S.A./CANADA \$10.00
AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND \$12.00
UK/IRISH REPUBLIC £5.00 STERLING.
OVERSEAS MEMBERS PAYMENT BY CASH ONLY
USUALLY BUT UK OVERSEAS FOR MONEY
(ORDER TRANSACTIONS)
UK MEMBERS PAYMENT BY CHEQUE OR POSTAL ORDER
MADE PAYABLE TO: KEITH GOOD.

IF JUST PAYING A GENERAL ENQUIRY PLEASE ENCLOSE STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE (UK) OR TWO INTERNATIONAL REPLY COUPONS (OVERSEAS).



FEW WOULD DISPUTE THE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT MADE ON 'DOCTOR WHO' IN RECENT YEARS BY SOPHIE ALDRED'S ENCHANTING PORTRAYAL OF ACE, AND IN THIS ARTICLE PAUL KIRKLEY ASSESSES THE INTRIGUING CONCEPT BEHIND

ACE OF HEARTS

IT'S BOUND TO BE A TALKING POINT. That's why I'm getting in first. I can feel a baying pack of similar hacks snapping at my heels, all clamouring for the same textural meat.

Buy why do I expect such a deluge of literature to start growing around one subject? Easy, because the twenty-sixth season of *Doctor Who* has confirmed that over the past three years we've been witness to the most fascinating and intriguing *Doctor Who* companion to date.

The reason we've had such a high turnover of assistants during the past twenty-six years is because the actors and actresses portraying them have quickly tired of a rôle that usually offers about as much to get your teeth into as a drumstick (the wooden kind, as opposed to fowl).

With Ace that's all changed. Oh yes, we've had intriguing ones before: Susan, the very first, is an enigma that puzzles us to this day, and Turlough, the turncoat refugee. But the problem with both these characters, and many other potentially interesting regulars, is that their characters have far too often been totally sacrificed in favour of nuts 'n' bolts stories and obvious plot devices.

Andrew Cartmel was obviously having none of that, and one could almost be forgiven for thinking the series *revolves* around the companion these days, which is no bad thing.

It's been well documented that the writers recently have been able to sit down and bounce ideas off Sophie Aldred (and Sylvester McCoy), and Cartmel has taken on board a number of suggestions and managed to channel it all into the scripts to create an N-dimensional character that is just that...a **character**. Okay, so Sarah Jane had a nice women's lib angle, but how did it help the script? Huh?

Let's pretend, for a moment, that we've gone back in time a couple of months. Let's leave the events of the season's second half 'til later. *Ghost Light*'s just finished, so what do we have?

We have another exorcism of guilt and mental suffering, dragged out of Ace's confused mind by the considerably more than cough and drop shock tactics of the Doctor. He's put her through the emotional mincer again, but she's come out cleaner for it. She's identified a horror from her past: Gabriel Chase is not haunted by ghosts, it's just infested with aliens. Another weight of days gone by off her mind. Just like she no longer fears clowns; they're only robots, after all. Also, she no longer feels so hung up about her pyrotechnic activities of 1983. The Doctor has cleansed another part of her soul.

It's all part of the continuous development of the character. In *Remembrance of the Daleks* she's horrified by the racism employed at the Smith household. In *Ghost Light* we find out why: the death of her friend, Menesha. In *Dragonfire* Ace "never 'ad no mum and dad", and in *Battlefield Morgaine* uses this tormented part of her mind against her: "I bet your parents hated your guts!"

Explosives are another area. Disturbed childhoods often lead to this sort of occupation. Witness rock star Fish (someone who's on record, literally, as having a "misplaced childhood")'s confessions that he turned to blowing up toy soldiers and generally creating explosive havoc. Another example can be seen in Lindsay Anderson's film *If...* where an unloved and ill-treated schoolboy eventually turns bazookas on his public school. Ace's is, perhaps, a milder, more controlled reaction, but a disturbing one nonetheless.

So, we think we understand the Doctor's motives: to make her face her deepest fears and to cleanse mental scars. But we should know better. Never think you know what the Doctor's motives are. Not this Doctor...

The Curse of Fenric. Probably the best story for a companion ever. It seems that the Doctor's motives for carting Ace around the Universe with him are much more complex. He recognised Fenric's hand in her destiny from the start...he saw her as a pawn in Fenric's game and took her on as one of his own. He used her to help him bring about the conclusion of his 2,000 year old game with the evil Fenric. Fenric's move had been to transport Ace to Iceworld, and the Doctor has manoeuvred his pawn to the final

THE CHARACTER MAGICALLY BROUGHT TO LIFE BY THE TALENTED ACTRESS WHOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE SERIES MAY NOW, SADLY, BE AT AN END...

battlefield of 1940's Yorkshire.

But it's much more than that. The Doctor's affections towards her are real; he's doing this as much to help her as he is to help himself. He has to exorcise Fenric's influence from her and, whilst he's at it, he might as well get her feelings towards her mother sorted out too.

At the end of *The Curse of Fenric*, Ace is a bit more cleansed. In a beautifully directed scene, she fights the undercurrents of love and hate and comes to the surface. She's not scared any more.

But with this character and these writers, it's not time for Ace to come clean yet. She's not ready to be turned back out on her own; back to Perivale. The TARDIS, she claims, is the only home she's got now, but she still needs to travel and develop. The influence of the Hunting World is strong on Ace, because she has no firm background she can use to deny it. So what if she becomes an animal? She likes feeling like that. But Ace can live as free as an animal without becoming one. The TARDIS, and the Doctor, they allow her to run forever, to feel the grass of alien worlds beneath her feet. So Ace denies bestiality, and chooses to stay by the Doctor's side and continue to grow up; continue finding herself.

All this continuity and running psychology is partnered by naturalism and realism that is refreshing in as lyrical and bombastic a programme as *Doctor Who*. Although her dialogue in *Dragonfire* was, at times, banal, contrived and dated (due mainly to the swearing restrictions in *Who*), the character has since **completely** traversed the scale to become the most natural and unaffected to date. For example, she greets Inspector McKenzie with a cheery "Hiya...alright?" (amusingly incongruous words from a fully outfitted gentlewoman!), and the marvellous: "If you don't like it then bog off!" Briggs, too, has picked this up in *Fenric*, and Ace's dialogue in the story was another feather in the cap of a writer who could go on to great things, and a writer who actually seems to **learn** from his mistakes. Another delightful touch was her acerbic comment on U2's longevity: "They were old enough to be drawing their pensions when I was clubbing it!" All these may seem trivial, but these small touches are a refreshing break from the verbosity of the Saward era (remember "I-am-known-as-the-Doctor"?). The odd "scumbag" still penetrates, but we can always put that down to her insecure roots - or maybe the Doctor just prevents her from saying anything stronger!

It all works, of course, in the end, because of the actress, and Sophie Aldred is able to take the excellent material she's offered, and put it to brilliant use. All the thought and insight could so easily have been lost if a lesser actress had taken the part, but Sophie never fails to play the character anything less than utterly convincing and endearingly. An added bonus, of course, is that Sophie herself is such a likeable, friendly and generally beautiful person.

But back to the land of fiction, and Perivale, in particular. Ace's friends, too, seem well-developed and real, even the wonderfully caricatured Ange, responsible for the classic line: "Oh, hi Ace, thought you were dead. That's what they said, either you were dead or you'd gone to Birmingham."

Of course, the Doctor is developing too. His past is taking on epic, almost Biblical proportions, and all this is deeply woven into the fabric of the plots themselves, giving *Doctor Who* more dimensions and levels of play than it's ever had (and I haven't even mentioned the underlying themes of a socks-over-greenwellies ozone friendly season that has also managed to encompass comment on love, evolution and the callousness of survival of the fittest). Does anybody really want to see a return to those days of UNIT troops giving us a weekly military exercise display?

The future of *Doctor Who* is uncertain, but hopefully safe. Sophie Aldred has hinted that she won't be back for Season 27, but her character demands one hell of an exit, because Ace can't just vanish.

She's far too important for that...

PAUL KIRKLEY

(Opposite page: Sophie Aldred, the actress)



ACE has a poor opinion of the security arrangements at Commander Millington's North Yorkshire base - and she's less than comfortable in 1940's fashions. But the Doctor has graver matters on his mind.

Dr Judson, inventor of the Navy's ULTIMA code-breaker, is using the machine to decipher the runic inscriptions in the crypt of a nearby church. Commander Millington is obsessed with his research into toxic bombs that he insists will

hasten the end of World War Two. A squad of the Red Army's crack special Missions brigade lands on the Yorkshire coast instructed to steal the ULTIMA device - unaware that Millington has turned it into a devastating secret weapon. And beneath the waters at Maiden's Point an ancient evil stirs...

The Doctor uncovers mysteries concealed within villainous plots - but what connects them all to a thousand-year-old curse?

Published in May, £2.50



Doctor WHO

No.
149

THE CURSE OF FENRIC

